

# JEEVADHARA

*A JOURNAL OF CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION*

## INTRA-ECCLESIAL RELATIONS AND EVANGELIZATION IN INDIA

THE INTER - ECCLESIAL RELATIONS IN THE INDIAN CONTEXT  
*Xavier Koodapuzha*

PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF EVANGELIZATION IN INDIA:  
AN ECUMENICAL PERSPECTIVE

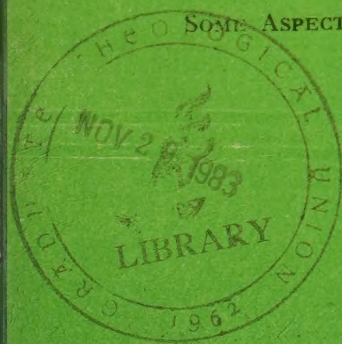
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DOCUMENTATION

BOOK REVIEW



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# **JEEVADHARA**

## **The People of God**

**INTRA-ECCLESIAL RELATIONS  
AND EVANGELIZATION IN INDIA**

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# Editorial

This issue of *Jeevadhara* deals with the topic 'Intra-ecclesial Relations and Evangelization in India'. The relations among the Churches have to be necessarily ecclesial just as the evangelizer has to be necessarily evangelical.

It is generally hailed as a great achievement of Vatican II that it has rediscovered the true nature of the Church as the communion of Churches. But this conciliar rediscovery is not yet equally understood, appreciated and accepted by all in the different spheres of ecclesiastical life. For many, even now, Catholic Church is the Roman Catholic Church and the other Churches within the Catholic communion are tolerated as such to 'show' the universality of the Roman Church! For some others Vatican II wanted to 'please' the Orientals with some statements which need not be taken seriously in the missionary or pastoral fields. There are still others who sincerely believe that strict *uniformity* alone will lead to the unity of the Church!

In this issue of *Jeevadhara* we have focussed our attention mainly on the Indian scene as we have here enough problems in the intra-ecclesial relations. Here there was only one Church, the Church of the Thomas Christians, up to the 16th century. This Church was indian in culture, Christian in religion and oriental in worship. The Portuguese colonizers came to India in the 16th century and they established latin dioceses at Goa and Cochin. They wanted to suppress the Oriental Church and ruled over them for nearly three centuries (1599-1896). Every historian will admit that this Latin rule caused disastrous divisions in the Church which continue even today. Finally the St. Thomas Christians succeeded in getting their own bishops in 1896. But the clerical formation continued to be under Latin missionaries. During the Latin rule the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Oriental Church was limited to a tiny corner of India. As Orientals they were not allowed to undertake missionary activities outside this territory. Those orientals who went outside this restricted area should follow the Latin traditions. Despite

these obstacles missionaries of the Oriental Church began to undertake missionary activities and they actually form nearly 70% of the missionary personnel of India. But the limitations imposed over this Church exist even today. Unfortunately this unjust system is being staunchly defended by many Latin bishops of India. The recent discussions at the CBCI sessions at Trichinopoly and Bombay reveal this attitude.

Hence in this issue of *Jeevadhara* we are discussing this problem in an ecclesiological and ecumenical perspective. The first article by Xavier Koodapuzha gives a general perspective of the inter-ecclesial relations while, in the second article, Geevarghese Chediyath focusses on the ecumenical aspect of this problem. It is followed by a biblical analysis of the concept of apostolicity by Mathew Vellanickal. Apostolicity and its uniqueness is a basic constitutive element of the individuality of the Churches. On the other hand, Felix Wilfred gives us a picture of the problem from the point of view of the Latin Church in India. The last item of this issue is documentation which presents some of the major ecclesiastical documents regarding the official norms to be followed in intra-ecclesial relations.

The Church exists solely to proclaim God's Kingdom. Hence the different Churches have to co-operate with each other in a creative way for fulfilling this fundamental obligation. Any kind of claims of superiority or territorial monopoly will be a counter-witness to the missionary vocation of the Church. The Church exists to proclaim God's Kingdom through self-effacing service to the humanity. Let all the Churches grow as much as they can and there cannot be any room for conflict if they are proclaiming the will of the One Who founded the Church.

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Xavier Koodapuzha



# The Inter-Ecclesial Relations in the Indian Context

Inter-ecclesial or "inter-ritual" relations have become an important topic for discussions in the sessions of the C.B.C.I.<sup>1</sup> In this article we want to make a historico-ecclesiological survey of this question in the Indian context. We have divided this study into four parts. In the introductory part we clarify the terms. In the second part we give a brief analysis of the structural evolution of the Church in general. In the third part we make a historico-theological survey of this problem in India. Finally in the fourth part we deal with some of the major ecclesiological problems in India in the sphere of inter-ecclesial relations.

## Part I. Introduction

### A. Centralization and its results

The word 'inter-ecclesial' would mean the relations or communion between the Catholic and non-Catholic Churches in an ecumenical perspective. But in this study we are dealing with the relations based on the concept of communion among the Churches within the Catholic Church in the Indian context. For the last few centuries, precisely from the medieval period, the Catholic Church in the West was assuming increasingly a monarchical structure which did not leave much room for the different Churches within to maintain and foster their identity and individuality. The papacy emerged as a politico-religious force in the West with the formation of the Papal states<sup>2</sup>. It ultimately led to the concept of Christendom according to which not only the religious but also the secular powers and governments had to submit to the "Theory of two Swords". It was a clear departure from the early traditions<sup>3</sup>. This process of centralization which led to a monolithic pattern of ecclesiastical structure was beyond the grasp of the Churches of the traditions. Unfortunately the various vicissitudes of secular and religious history widened the gap between the East and the

West. For example, the expansion of Islam, the crusades, growth of nationalism among the different countries and the political polarization subsequent to the protestant revolt, the French revolution etc. are some of the major factors which precipitated this ecclesial crisis.

The twentieth century is indeed called the 'century of the Church' for various reasons. The ecumenical endeavours, historical and Patristic approach to trace the sources, the Biblical and liturgical movements and above all Vatican II have paved the way for rediscovering the true nature of the Church. This rediscovery naturally leads us to certain theological conclusions which have practical consequences especially in the Indian context.

This development in the West did have its impact on the Church in India and still continues to exert its influence. The last two general sessions of the CBCI held at Tiruchirappally in January 1982 and in Bombay in January 1983 provide us with ample evidence of this fact. The Bishops discussed and prayed together, remaining fully faithful to their own positions! Their inability to find a solution in the CBCI sessions to the problem in the inter-ecclesial relations on the basis of the equality of Churches has forced the Latin Bishops to continue their claims in the form of appointing committees which too have already proved unsuccessful in reaching a solution. It is in this context that we make this brief and honest effort to understand this problem in a historical-ecclesiological perspective.

## B. Clarification of terms

First of all, we find it highly necessary to clarify the terms which are commonly used in the inter-ecclesial discussions. They are often used inaccurately to convey the key concepts of the Church. Therefore, we have to start with the clarification of the terms.

### 1) Churches, and not mere Rites<sup>4</sup>

The word *Rite* is now being exclusively used by the Latin Bishops of India to connote the reality of the Church. The word *rite* which conveys a too superficial reality is inadequate to express the concept of the Church which signifies a much deeper reality. In English Dictionaries the meaning given to the word *rite* is the



following: Form of procedure, solemn ceremony, the form in which ceremony or observance is carried out, ceremonial observances, customary words, gestures etc. Consequently the word *ritualism* means the tendency to pay too much attention to the rituals with the result that true faith is neglected. Many people of the Latin Church or the latinized Orientals seem to be arguing on this subject of rite in the above mentioned shallow sense. The word rite is unknown in the Eastern traditions. For them the Church is a mystery which has both internal and external elements. It is a divine-human reality. The first chapter of the *Lumen Gentium* which bears the title, "mystery of the Church", is quite in tune with the Eastern point of view of the Church. It is worth noting that this title was given to the first chapter of *Lumen Gentium* in order to correct a superficial understanding of the Church, laying which was too much emphasis on the externals, that is the organizational structures, jurisdictional claims, authoritarian attitudes, ritualism, privileges and prerogatives etc. Even the attempt to introduce a fifth note to the Church as *ecclesia Romana* was rejected at the very beginning, as such attempts would project an exaggerated emphasis on the external or visible aspects of the Church,

For the Orientals the Catholic Church is a communion of individual Churches which are equal in dignity, rights and obligations. For them an individual Church has its own liturgy, theology, discipline, hierarchy, spirituality, administrative system etc. The word *rite* does not convey at all these essential elements that constitute the Church. Therefore, the expressions like rite, ritual, inter-ritual etc. are entirely unacceptable to the Orientals. The use of the word *rite*, according to the Orientals, is like an empty shell, devoid of real content. May be because of the importance given to the rituals, titles, territorial and jurisdictional claims within Christendom this term *rite* became identical with the Church in the West. But, for the Eastern Churches this term rite remains too foreign and strange. It is sad that on the CBCI level these words rite, ritual, inter-ritual etc. are almost exclusively being used to denote the inter-ecclesial relations. These expressions are quite in harmony with the notion of the Church in the outdated thought patterns and categories of the West. In this context it is quite interesting to note that in a memorandum prepared and submitted by the Latin Bishops of India to His Holiness the Pope John Paul II, one can observe the following subtitle on page 15: "*Rite* as synonymous with the

Church". And on page 16, "It is important that the two principles of distinctive *rite* and *territoriality* be clearly safeguarded"<sup>5</sup>.

## 2. Catholicity and communion of Churches

It is generally hailed as a great achievement of Vatican II that it has rediscovered the true nature of the Church which is a communion of individual Churches. This rediscovery is clearly formulated in the following article. "The Church, holy and Catholic, which is the mystical Body of Christ, is made up of the faithful who are organically united in the Holy Spirit through the same Faith, the same sacraments and the same government and who, combining into various groups held together by a hierarchy, *form separate Churches or rites*"<sup>6</sup>.

These Churches are the legitimate heirs of the divine tradition and this apostolic patrimony of the Churches constitute the divine heritage of the universal Church. Hence the Council teaches: "For, distinguished as they are by their venerable antiquity they are bright with that tradition which was handed down from the apostles through the Fathers, and which forms part of the divinely revealed and undivided heritage of the universal Church"<sup>7</sup>.

The plurality of the Churches is the basic ecclesiological reality. This pluralism is linked with the original testimony of the apostles which are enshrined in their ecclesial traditions. The Churches of the East, Catholic as well as non-Catholic, consider these traditions as sacred and normative in their ecclesial life. Consequently the decree on Ecumenism makes the following statement on this rich diversity of the ecclesial traditions. "However, the heritage handed down by the apostles was received in different forms and ways, so that from the very beginnings of the Church it has had a varied development in various places, thanks to a similar variety of natural gifts and conditions of life"<sup>8</sup>. According to the Eastern point of view the fidelity to their own ecclesial heritage is the fidelity to the Universal heritage of the Catholic Church as it forms an essential part of the heritage of the Universal Church. Hence the Church teaches: "All should realize that it is of supreme importance to understand, venerate, preserve and foster the exceedingly rich liturgical and spiritual heritage of the Eastern Churches, in order to faithfully preserve the fullness of Christian tradition"<sup>9</sup>.



The Council clearly reminds the Catholic Orientals of their right and obligation to remain faithful to their particular ecclesial patrimony. "While thanking God that many Eastern sons of the Catholic Church, who are preserving this heritage and wish to express it more faithfully and completely in their lives, are already living in full communion with their brethren who follow the tradition of the West, this sacred Synod declares that this entire heritage of spirituality and liturgy, discipline and theology, in their various traditions, belongs to the full Catholic and apostolic character of the Church<sup>10</sup>."

These conciliar documents are in full harmony with the Eastern traditions. It is quite obvious that the Catholic Church includes rich diversity through which her Catholicity is authentically expressed. Some people seem to understand and appreciate the Catholicity only in a mere territorial or geographical perspective, i.e. the Church spread in all the continents. But this territorial expansion need not necessarily be an expression of universality or catholicity. The more powerful can establish its sway on the rest and it can have certain self satisfaction of its own success in conquest and dominion. Thus great conquerors of the world succeeded in establishing their dominion in extensive territories and claimed their territorial supremacy and universality. But the universality and Catholicity of the Church is radically different. This kind of expansionistic vision is entirely foreign to the nature of the Church. For the Orientals the Trinitarian communion is the basis and model of the ecclesiology of communion. "This is the sacred mystery of the unity of the Church, in Christ and through Christ, with the Holy Spirit energizing a variety of functions. The highest exemplar and source of this mystery is the unity, in the Trinity of Persons, of one God, the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit<sup>11</sup>."

This intimate unity is achieved through authenticity, genuine openness and mutual acceptance. This openness expressed in rich diversity is the key to understand the Catholicity of the Church. People are baptized into the life of the Trinity. This Trinitarian Mystery is the very root of the life of the Church. The prophetic words of a great Oriental theologian of India, Fr. Placid J. Podipara, are quite relevant in this context: "God Triune must be the model for different rites and jurisdictions



that exist in the same place. Each of the Persons of the Trinity is distinct one from the other, but there is only one God, since, the three Persons have one and the same Divinity or Divine Nature. Again, the distinction of Persons being kept intact, each Person is in each of the other too. The different Rites in the same territory can in like manner be united among themselves: Each must keep its distinction with its priests, bishop, jurisdiction, churches etc. insisting on its identity, cultivating the theology spirituality and so on, proper to each. Keeping their distinction in this way they can be many, but One in Faith and Charity and under the supreme Authority of the Roman Pontiff<sup>12</sup>.

## II. Structural Evolution and Roman Centralization

Certain objections raised against the exercise of ecclesiastical jurisdictions of the Oriental Churches in India demand a historical-ecclesiological survey of the problem of the origin and development of territorial jurisdiction.

### 1) Structural evolution of the Church in general<sup>13</sup>

In the early period we find the spread and growth of the Churches with their own traditions maintaining the bond of unity. The different local Churches were called the Churches of God. A local Church was a worshipping community united in profound fellowship. The characteristics of these communities were their solidarity, mutual love and harmony. These communities were never considered mere administrative units of the universal Church. Each Church was considered a perfect Church in which the whole ecclesial reality was present. The mutual openness of these local Churches constituted its catholicity. This catholic openness of one Church to the other was based on the principle of communion. The leaders of these communities were called *episcopos* or *overseers* who presided over these assemblies for worship and maintained the bond of unity in charity. Bishops were spiritual leaders who were sources of spiritual inspiration. They considered themselves *doulos* (servants of God) following the traditions established by the apostles, "*for we preach not ourselves but Jesus Christ Our Lord, and ourselves, your servants through Jesus*"<sup>14</sup>. The primary reality in the Church is the *ecclesia*, the Christian com-

munity. Hence the ancient liturgies have all the prayers in plural. This communitarian dimension reflected in the administrative realm as well. St. Cyprian explains this principle as the tradition. "I have made it a rule, ever since the beginning of my episcopate, to make no decision without consulting you (priests and deacons), without the approbation of the people<sup>15</sup>". Even in the election of bishops the laity had a key role to play.

But a certain change took place in the beginning of the fourth century. The Church became the official religion of the Roman Empire. This official character brought with it far-reaching consequences such as an imperial system of the Empire called territorial jurisdiction. The Roman Emperor Diocletian (284-305) divided the Empire into prefectures, dioceses and provinces<sup>16</sup>. The word diocese (*dioikien*) means administration. It is an administrative district. It is interesting to note that this territorial system which the Western Church borrowed from the political administrative system of the Roman Empire has its staunch defenders at present from among the Latin hierarchy in India! According to them Bishop is a ruler of a particular territory even if there is no proper Christian community. Just as there is only one village officer in a village or a tahsildar in a taluk or a collector in a district or a chief minister in a state, a bishop should have exclusive claim over a particular territory<sup>17</sup>. This is the sad consequence of a system which has no evangelical value beneath it. They fear that if the missionaries of another ecclesial tradition preach the gospel of Christ and establish Christian communities, it would upset their exclusive dominion, control, prestige and influence! So the result would be conflict. In order to avoid it extensive territories are left unevangelized! This seems to be the position strongly and vehemently defended by some of the bishops of the CBCI, which obstructs the missionary personnel of the Oriental Churches from undertaking missionary activities!

## 2. Church Authority: territorial or spiritual?

The territorial claims of bishops required civil and ecclesiastical laws to protect it. Thus we find the ecclesiastical laws gradually assuming a secular colour. Yves Congar in his study on the historical development of authority makes the following observations on this strange situation: "Under these conditions we ought

to expect that authority would change its character and that it would acquire a much more secular, much more juridical meaning based simply on the relations of superior to subordinate<sup>18</sup>." This secularization of a spiritual authority in certain cases forced the Christians to search for genuine spiritual inspirations outside this juridical frame work. The patriarchs of monasticism and the founders of religious life could satisfy their legitimate yearnings to a certain extent. These men of God could exercise spiritual authority. Thus the monasteries became the sources of spiritual enlightenment. In order to safeguard the spiritual character of the ecclesiastical authority in certain places the people wanted the monks to become their bishops. The oldest section of the latin rituals for ordination speaks more about his duties than about his juridical titles. "The bishop must devote himself to an assiduous study of Holy Scripture to prayer, fasting and hospitality. He must welcome, listen to and help everybody, he must practise almsgiving. He is to edify his people by word of mouth and by the celebration of liturgy<sup>19</sup>."

The canonical development in the Church, especially in the West, was to serve the purpose of putting up a fortress around the prestige and honour of the ecclesiastical dignitaries. The well-known canonical collections of Bologna, Rome and Paris were trying to classify, harmonize and systematize the juridical structures of the Church. It is worth noting that certain biblical texts such as Jeremiah 1:10; 1 Cor. 2:15; 6:3 and I Pet. 2:9 began to be commonly used for establishing the supremacy of the ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the secular rulers<sup>20</sup>. These claims demanded strong disciplinary systems with penal sanctions. The introduction of Inquisition was a natural outcome. It makes one think that legalism and juridicism gained ground in the Church when it is spiritually poor and materially rich!<sup>21</sup>. Even St. Bernard wrote to Pope Eugenius III: "You allow yourself to be overburdened with decisions you have to give in all kinds of external and secular cases. As far as you are concerned hear of nothing but awards and laws. All these as well as claims to prestige and riches go back to Constantine and not to Peter<sup>22</sup>."

This juridical and legal system is external and superficial which does not reach the depth of a spiritual man. Even the sacrament of sacred ordination began to be distinguished in the West



on legal basis, *potestas ordinis et potestas jurisdictionis*. Thus even if one is sacramentally ordained priest or bishop, he requires a *canonical authorization* for exercising his pastoral authority!<sup>23</sup>.

The juridical structure of the Church which was gradually being shaped after the civil system demanded centralization. The subjects who are the ordinary people called laity had to be supervised by superiors and this process of supervising needed a wide range of subordination in various degrees which ultimately should reach the highest authority. The Roman centralization after the monarchical pattern was the natural outcome of this juridical process. Hence the western ecclesiology until Vatican II did bear the title that 'the Church is monarchical'<sup>24</sup>. A certain amount of juridicism was quite evident.

But Vatican II which was convoked for the renewal and reunion has set norms for a clear departure from the man-made accretions in the Church. It has opened a new horizon for understanding and appreciating the true nature of the Church of Christ. This process leads us to the early sources of the Church for liberating us from the jurisdictional claims over territories and unevangelical legalism!

### III. The Indian Reality of the Churches

Many people even in India do not seem to have yet realized that the strange situation in the field of evangelization in India was discussed in Vatican II and the art. 3 of the document on the Oriental Churches was formulated to put an end to the injustice done to the Oriental Churches of India. All the commentators of this conciliar document have observed this fact<sup>25</sup>.

#### 1. What has gone wrong in India?

Until the 16th century there was only one Church and one ecclesiastical jurisdiction in India. That was the apostolic Church of the St Thomas Christians of India. These Christians were Indian in culture, Christian in religion and oriental in worship. There was no division among them. It was in such a background that the Portuguese missionaries reached the Malabar coast. The St. Thomas

Christians were immensely happy to welcome and greet them though they belonged to the Latin tradition. The Portuguese gradually established themselves politically and then started latin dioceses where there was already an oriental jurisdiction. The Metropolitan of the St. Thomas Christians was known as "the Metropolitan of the whole of India."<sup>26</sup> The Orientals did not consider the latins as rivals or intruders. Their concept of the Church was not in terms of territory but of the community of the People of God. But as soon as the Portuguese established themselves politically and ecclesiastically, they began to think in terms of *territorial jurisdiction* and started imposing their dominion over the Oriental Church of India. They even dared to keep the bishops of the St. Thomas Christians under their custody at Goa! Even the Popes had to intervene repeatedly to safeguard the rights of the oriental jurisdiction. But towards the end of the 16th century when Mar Abraham, bishop of the St. Thomas Christians, died (1597) the Portuguese grabbed the control over the oriental Church<sup>27</sup>. They did everything to subjugate this ancient Church under the Portuguese crown and latin jurisdiction. The Goan archbishop Alexis Dom Menezes convened a 'synod' at Diamper in Kerala in 1599 and introduced radical changes by latinizing this apostolic Church. The Padroado (Patronage) of the king of Portugal was also imposed over these Christians! The Oriental Primatial see called the Metropolitan of all India was suppressed. Their time-honoured traditions and the entire system of ecclesiastical administration were ignored. Moreover, latin bishops were imposed over them. Their all India jurisdiction was curtailed and confined to a very restricted area in central Kerala, i.e. only 0. 47% of the Indian territory<sup>28</sup>. This unhappy situation in the ecclesiastical history of India continued for nearly three centuries (1599-1896).

The consistent and systematic process of deorientalization and latinization was the established policy of the latin rule of this period. This injustice perpetrated by a catholic colonial power from the West over an oriental Church in the East have indeed arrested the attention of scholars not only in India but also abroad which ultimately led to the floor of Vatican II.

## 2. The consequences of latin jurisdiction over Orientals

### a) Unity shattered

The latin rule over the Orientals had far-reaching grievous consequences. The unity of an apostolic Church which existed in the heart of Asia resisting the all absorbing and all embracing force of Hinduism for sixteen centuries was shattered. The three centuries of latin rule witnessed concerted efforts for defending their ecclesial patrimony which they called the 'Law of Thomas'. Their legitimate resistance against an imposed Latin rule in the name of religion was branded as schism and heresy. Might was considered right and the grievances of a suppressed and oppressed ecclesial community during the colonial rule went unheeded! And this oppression provided the background of the shattering of the unity of a Church. Those who have done researches in this period cannot but condemn this colonial rule in the name of religion. "It was during these long years under the latins that the Thomas Christians lost even the very sense of their identity and individuality; they became a Church neither occidental nor oriental, a Church with no organic growth but with plenty of additions and monstrous latinization. It was in this period they witnessed divisions after divisions in the one apostolic Church in India. It was a period when they tried to regain their independence from the Latins."<sup>29</sup>

The Thomas Christians who were fed up with the latin rule under the successive Latin prelates, Francis Ros (1599-1624), Stephen Britto (1624-41) and Francis Garcia (1641-59), put up a common protest at Mattancherry on Friday, 3rd of January 1653 and took an oath that they would no more obey the Latin rule of the Jesuits.<sup>30</sup> These Jesuit prelates had latinized, deformed and hybridized the Oriental Church introducing substantial changes in the administrative, liturgical and social systems and spheres. The Thomas Christians were extremely indignant at this alien rule but they were powerless compared to the Portuguese who had the support of the western powers, both political and ecclesiastical. The public protest at Mattancherry, known in history as the Coonan Cross Oath, divided the Oriental Church into two. But after the oath some returned and continued to be under the latin rule while the others refused to return. Rome established a



Vicariate called the Vicariate Apostolic of Malabar having its headquarters at Verapoly for those who disliked the Portuguese rule. Thus they were divided under two latin jurisdictions, Padroado and Propaganda. But in both the episcopal sees the bishops were latins, Europeans of Jesuit, Carmelite or other religious orders. But the dissident group accepted an oriental Syrian bishop of the Jacobite Church. This community was again divided into Anglican, Marthomite, Thozh yoor, Syro-Malankara Catholic, Orthodox and St. Thomas evangelical Churches.

The struggle for liberation from the latin rule was quite intense all through these three centuries. The Catholic Thomas Christians (*Pazhayakuttukar*) were under the latin bishops and the group which rejected the latin rule (*Puthenkuttukar*) made many joint efforts to restore the unity of their Church. Their only condition for reunion was that they should have bishops of the same Church (rite). The bishops of the Jacobite section had sent official letters in the name of the entire community under him requesting the Holy See of Rome to receive them into Catholic communion. They were ready to accept all the directives of the Holy See except the alien rule of the latin bishops. These efforts for reunion from the part of the separated Thomas Christians were continuously and strongly opposed by the Latin bishops of Verapoly and Cochin. For them the unity of the Thomas Christians was a threat to their Latin jurisdiction over the Orientals. Various documents kept in Rome reveal this tragic truth<sup>31</sup>. The efforts under the leadership of Joseph Cariattil, Paremmakkal Thomas, Jacobite Prelate Mar Dionysius I. alias Mar Thoma VI, and the reunion which took place at Alleppey in 1799 under the leadership of Thachil Mathootharakkan were rejected and disowned by the latin bishops who happened to be their rulers<sup>32</sup>. Facts are indeed stranger than fiction! Students of Church history can read these documents in the archives of Rome only with a deep feeling of sorrow at this unchristian policy of the latin missionaries against the unity and catholicity of the Church of God. Our non-Catholic brethren attribute these atrocities to the Catholic Church!

## b. Loss of identity

The Oriental Church of India which is as old as Christianity itself, had developed an ecclesial life in harmony with the socio-politico-cultural life of the nation. Their system of ecclesiastical administration was deeply rooted in the tradition of the place. Their church building resembled Hindu temples except the cross which occupied the central place. Their feasts and fasts had much in common with those of their Hindu brethren. Their priestly formation was fully under the control of learned and holy indigenous priests. Malpanates, their centres of clerical formation was a Christian form of *gurukula*. Their parish council which had had an effective role in the ecclesiastical administration under the leadership of priests was the adaptation of the Dravidian village assembly called *Mantram*. Above all their bishops who were of the same liturgical tradition were profoundly spiritual men who spent most of their time in prayer, fasting and studying of Sacred Scripture and Patristics. Their administration was in the hands of the local assembly called *Palliyogam* under the general direction of the Archdeacon. Their family celebrations in connection with important events such as birth, marriage, death, funeral and other solemn occasions had indigenous Dravidian character. All these things had developed into a life-style and their indigenous ecclesial identity was called the Law of Thomas. The latin rule from 1599 undermined this indigenous ecclesial identity and violently imposed an entirely alien system over them. It is clear from the documents of the synod of Diamper that the complaint against the St. Thomas Christians was not that they were not integrated into the Indian culture. But that they were so much like their following of the place!<sup>33</sup> The three centuries of foreign latin domination succeeded in destroying most of these indigenous characteristics. It is true that the Thomas Christians were finally liberated from the Latin Bishops in 1896. But the clerical formation which plays a key role in the ecclesial leadership continued to be exclusively under the foreign latin bishops with their colonial heritage. This situation answers to the accusations of some of the latin prelates who have observed that they do not find anything special among the Catholic Orientals, different from the latins. Who is responsible for this loss of identity?<sup>34</sup>

Now there is a fad of indianization without an adequate historical analysis of the heritage of the indigenous Church in India. Today there are people who make noisy appeals for indianization and an 'Indian' liturgy. They are just meant to cover up the foreign and alien titles, ecclesiastical administration, devotional practices, ecclesiastical vestments etc. with an indian garb! The absence of a genuine monastic life and their blind acceptance of the foreign activist systems of religious life and the thirst for popularity, power and prestige have very little in common with the indian culture, eastern spirituality or oriental traditions! A genuine restoration of the traditions of the St. Thomas Christians which is deeply rooted in the Dravidian heritage is inevitable for any solid attempt for indigenization<sup>35</sup>.

#### IV. Problems and Prospects

In this last stage of our brief survey, we intend to make a short analysis of some of the symptoms of the wrong understanding of the very nature of the Church and its evangelical mission.

##### 1. Equality of the Churches

The equality of the individual Churches is the necessary sequence of the principle of the communion of Churches. For they are the legitimate heirs of the divine heritage of the Church of God. They are equally entrusted with the missionary commandment. Hence no Church can claim any kind of superiority over another. Every Church is called to share its life which it lives. "That" which was from the beginning which we have heard, which we have seen... the Word of life... we testify to it and proclaim to you.... so that you may have fellowship with us and our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ."<sup>36</sup> *Koinonia* is the favourite term used to express the life in the Church and it should be made evident in the inter-ecclesial relations. The Spirit of God abides in all the Churches and consequently all the Churches are the Churches of God. This truth urges the Churches to be open to the other Churches and foster the spirit of communion.



Equality and communion implied equality in rights and obligations. The most fundamental obligation and right of a Church are its missionary dynamism. The divine command to go and preach the gospel was not exclusively meant for any particular apostle or Church. Therefore all the Churches should acknowledge this fundamental right and any attempt to obstruct the exercise of this right is tantamount to the very denial of the basic principle of the equality of Churches. Art. 3 of the decree on the Oriental Churches of Vatican II was formulated to eradicate the structure which denied equality to the Oriental Churches of India.<sup>37</sup> Now the equality and missionary obligations are denied on the ground that it would pave the way for multiple jurisdiction which would cause conflicts. This fear of conflicts among the bishops does not speak well of the bishops, clergy and religious! Bishops have to collaborate with fellow bishops and priests not only of their own ecclesial tradition but also of other Churches especially within the Catholic communion. Anyhow the solution to the imaginary conflicts of bishops can never be the very denial of the principle of equality of Churches. In India almost the whole territory was monopolized by the Latin Church during the colonial period. Can we justify it in any sense? Even within the limited territory allowed to the Oriental Church parallel latin dioceses were established and false propaganda is being made outside Kerala that there are conflicts among *riles* and therefore the Orientals should be denied their rights to undertake missionary activities! Peace and harmony is the result of justice. Therefore, attention is to be paid to the removal of injustice. Any how the superficial and unjust solution of the Pre-Vatican period is corrected by Vatican II and hence those who cling to the pre-Vatican principle of the superiority of the Latin Church over the Oriental Churches seem to be fighting a losing battle against the Catholicity, communion and equality of the Churches.

## 2. Uniformity at the cost of unity

India is almost a continent in all aspects namely in languages, culture, religion, races, climate, topography etc. The majority of the people belong to the Hindu religion which is almost a collection of different religious traditions. Genuine Hindus hate uniformity even in religious matters. They have different forms

of worship following different traditions with their own explanations. It is nothing but a lie to state that the Indian reality is not favourable to differences in ecclesial traditions. For Indians diversity is nothing strange and tolerance is their time-honoured cultural-religious heritage. It is indeed strange to see that some of the latin bishops fear that if the Oriental Churches are undertaking missionary activities there will be different ecclesiastical traditions and forms of worship in the same territory which would cause confusion and division in the mission fields. No genuine indian can argue like this as this is entirely alien to the pluralistic life situation in India. The latins may be arguing for uniformity, following the medieval ecclesiastical uniformity in the western Christendom<sup>38</sup>.

This kind of thinking takes us back to the middle ages where people like Humbert de Romanis (1194-1277, the fifth Master General of the Dominicans (O.P.), argued in the Council of Lyons in 1294 that "variety is the mother and beginning of discord"<sup>39</sup>. The words of Pope Paul VI to Cardinal Willibrands, explaining the reasons of the failure of the reunion of the Greeks are thought provoking. "The Latins chose texts and formulae expressing an ecclesiology that had been conceived and developed in the West. These were proposed to the Emperor and the Greek Church, to be accepted without discussion. A unity achieved in this way could not be accepted completely by the mentality of the eastern Christians, and therefore, when the first difficulties arose it was unhappily broken away."<sup>40</sup>

At the time of the crusades the Western Patriarchate spread among the Eastern Patriarchates and those who wanted to remain easterners had to face the threat of the latin practice of one territory, one bishop, one jurisdiction! But this was under the false conviction that the Latin Church was superior to the eastern Churches and that a good Catholic must be a Latin! The canon 9 of Lateran IV in which the Orientals were conspicuously absent expresses this medieval western attitude. But this kind of medieval European attitude is foreign to Indians who are born and brought up in the Indian cultural heritage. The clergy who are trained in the "seminaries and houses of religious forma"

tion under the latins and the orientals who are latinized must have been trained to think on these lines.

### 3. One territory, one bishop, one jurisdiction?

The medieval concept of exclusive jurisdiction had long been given up by the Popes. The acceptance of the jurisdiction of the Catholic Armenian Patriarch of Antioch by Pope Gregory IX (1227-41) and that of the Greek Melchite Patriarch along with the Latin hierarchy in Antioch (1247) etc. reveal the mind of the Popes. Pope Leo XIII of happy memory separated the Oriental Catholics of India from the jurisdiction of the Latin bishops and established separate jurisdiction for the Orientals in the same territory where latins also have jurisdiction. Vatican II has clearly abrogated the exclusive territorial principle in article 4 of the *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*. "Therefore, attention should everywhere be given to the preservation and growth of each individual Church. For this purpose parishes and a special hierarchy *should be established* for each where the spiritual good of the faithful so demands. The ordinaries of the various individual Churches which have *jurisdiction in the same territory* should, by taking common counsel in regular meetings, strive to promote unity of action."<sup>41</sup> The mind of the Catholic Church is quite obvious in this decree of Vatican II. The Church expects unity in action among the clergy and hierarchy. The territorial principle is associated with the colonial principle of control over territories<sup>42</sup>! After all, the territory belongs to the nation, not to the Latins nor to the Orientals! The evangelization is not on the basis of territory but of the people. At present there are many latin bishops who have extensive territories under them without a proper local Christian community<sup>43</sup>.

Some of the territories are ten times larger than the whole of Kerala itself. But even the bishops of these dioceses are not happy to part with 'their' territory in favour of the Orientals! Is it not a colonial policy?

Archbishop Henry D' Souza on behalf of the Latin bishops has made a concession that the Oriental Catholics could work freely in Kerala and after converting all the people (100%) there more territories could be opened outside<sup>44</sup>. If so, we have to pre-



sume that the European latins came to India after making everybody of their homeland ardent catholics! And the Latin missionaries from Mangalore or Goa or elsewhere have proceeded to the other parts of India after converting everybody of their homeland into catholicism! But the facts seem to argue differently. The spokesman of the latin hierarchy has discovered this principle exclusively for the Oriental Catholics of India. The students of Indian Church history know well the enormous amount of sacrifices the St. Thomas Christians have made for preserving and propagating their Catholic Faith. Not only have they preserved and fostered their Christian faith, but also sustain the Indian missions with nearly 70% of the missionary personnel.

*For the Orientals territory is not their concern but the freedom to undertake missionary activities without sacrificing their ecclesial heritage.* In this context the article 5 of OE is quite relevant. 'This sacred synod, therefore, not only honours this ecclesiastical and spiritual heritage with merited esteem and rightful praise, but also unhesitatingly looks upon it as the heritage of Christ's universal Church. For this reason, it solemnly declares that the Churches of the East as much as those of the West fully enjoy the right, and are in duty bound, to rule themselves.'<sup>46</sup> Therefore, the so called principle of one territory, one jurisdiction, one bishop cannot be defended ecclesiologically and historically.

#### 4. False approach to Indianization

Indianization is an appealing topic of the day. Discussions at various levels are being conducted on this topic. Articles, reviews and books dealing with this topic are being published abundantly. We too have no doubt about the relevance of this discussion. But we would observe that Indianization is basically a principle to be experienced and lived. Culture is not a ready made system which can be artificially created all on a sudden. Culture is deeply rooted in the human conventions of the particular life style of a people who have deep roots in the past. It is not a system which a few people of good imagination can dictate to the rest of the community. Cultural integration has evolved from the normal life situation of a particular society. The culture is not free from the stress and strain, ups and downs, joys and hopes, griefs and anxieties of the human family.

Today there is a superficial approach to these profound questions. Some people are eager to adopt some elements of the cultural and religious symbols of the Hindu religion.<sup>47</sup> The Indian culture is not an artificial one. It affects the entire life situation of the people in the economic, social, cultural and philosophico-religious fields. Unfortunately most of the so-called indianizers want to appear as Indians than to be real heirs of the Indian culture by *living and experiencing* it. They try to introduce a violent and artificial division between Indian and non-Indian. Where do we find the roots of Indian culture? For many, as mentioned above, it starts with the invasion of the Aryans. According to them the Vedic Hinduism with its philosophico-religious system of the Aryan heritage constitutes the basis of Indian culture. Consequently their concept of Indianization is almost the same as hinduisation. For example, in Hinduism one cannot trace a clear and sharp distinction between philosophy and religion. So the pluralistic tradition of Hinduism has different kinds of explanation. But one should realize that prior to the gradual incursion of Aryans there was an Indian culture. The famous Indus valley civilization according to many was Dravidian<sup>48</sup>. It was not limited to Indus valley alone. The subsequent excavations and researches have proved that this culture extended further to the west with close affinity with the Sumerian culture which evolved in Mesopotamia, Persia and India under various vicissitudes. The rich diversity of the cultural heritage of the different tribal groups leads us back to the Pre-Aryan period. In the light of this brief survey which needs a longer study and analysis we may conclude that many of the present attempts aimed at Indianization seem not to have understood the heart of true India. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, tried to depict the true cultural image of India in his famous book, the *Discovery of India*, where he explains the close affinity of the Indian culture with that of Persia and Mesopotamia of the Middle East<sup>49</sup>.

Interestingly enough, following the lead of the so-called Indianization some of the members of the Oriental Churches have started thinking that Aryanization is equivalent to Indianization. Historians like Elangulam Kunjan Pillai have convincingly proved that the Aryan Hinduistic heritage did find wide acceptance in the south, especially in Kerala, only towards the end of the first

millennium A. D. Even after the Aryan tide the Thomas Christians of India remained faithful to their Dravidian heritage. This heritage as we have seen above, is profoundly Indian having its close affinity with the ancient Mesopotamian culture. The Oriental Church in India with their spiritual, cultural, liturgical and ecclesiastical heritage which was developed in intimate relation with the other Churches founded by the same apostle St. Thomas was never considered by them or by the non-Christians as alien to Indian culture. This has to be taken into account if we are to have any meaningful discussion on the concept of Indianization.

### **5. Neo-colonialism through training centres and ecclesiastical structures**

Colonialism which started in the 16th century was intended for discovering new centres for the commercial, territorial, cultural and military expansion of some of the western countries which had strong naval forces to undertake long and dangerous expeditions. The naval and military officers were commissioned to establish strategic centres from where they could infiltrate into other places. Missionaries accompanied them and quite often, they were the closest collaborators of the colonialists. Thus the centres of the colonial powers gradually developed into ecclesiastical latin jurisdiction. The dioceses of Goa (1534) and Cochin (1558) have this story to tell us. The purpose of the diocese of Cochin was mainly to absorb and bring the Oriental Catholics under the control of the Portuguese. After establishing these dioceses we come across the colonial policy of conquest. Thus in 1599 in the 'synod' of Diamper the archbishop of Goa, the ecclesiastical leadership of Cochin, the Portuguese military and naval officers there and the Jesuits worked together as a team in bringing the Thomas Christians under their ecclesiastical jurisdiction and extending the Padroado of the king of Portugal over them. There begins the history of double jurisdiction under the colonial power of Portugal. Thus from the 16th century we find that India was monopolised by the Westerners and it began to be called a 'latin territory'. Similarly when the French colonizers came to India they too followed almost the same colonial policy in the political and ecclesiastical fields<sup>50</sup>. The English naval force accompanied by the C. M. S and L. M. S. missionaries established pockets of colonial powers in Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Kottayam etc. They became the administrative centres of Anglican influence. The



result was that the ancient Oriental Church of India with its indigenous heritage fell a prey to the influences of these colonial powers. A similar trend can also be observed in the spiritual and intellectual realms. The centres of clerical and religious formation came under the control of the colonial powers. They knew that through the centres of formation they can maintain their dominion in the ecclesiastical field. The seminaries and centres of higher learning were not projecting an indigenous image. On the contrary, they were faithfully following the patterns of similar institutions in the West. In the pre-Conciliar consultation on the question of the freedom of the Oriental Churches in undertaking missionary responsibility the suggestion from a higher academic institute in India was in the negative. They had been quite faithful to their colonial heritage! We come across the same attitude of colonial monopoly and exclusive claims when the question of freedom for evangelization was discussed in the sessions of the CBCI. There we find that some of the bishops were not ready to part with their territories in favour of the Oriental missionaries. It is a fact that many latin bishops need the assistance of oriental missionary personnel<sup>52</sup>. Such an attitude can be compared to those who want the milk of the cow and are not prepared to maintain the cow! After all, the maintenance of the cow is troublesome! All these reveal that the great obstacle in the inter-ecclesial relations is the territorial claim of colonial monopoly. The Oriental Churches of India do not expect any territory but only the freedom to evangelize, in their own mother country which is a right enshrined in the constitution of India. It is also acknowledged by Vatican II in art. 3 of O E. The territorial claims of exclusivism is not in harmony with eastern heritage. It is a colonial policy in a new garb.

## Conclusion

We have been making a brief survey of the problems in the inter-ecclesial relations in India. The so-called problems entirely diasappear if we are ready to accept God's reign as the ultimate goal. It is a radical revolution where the will of God is the law of men. The history has revealed that it was during the Constantinian era when the Church became the official religion of the Roman Empire that the territorial administrative system

was introduced into the Church of God. That system was fortified gradually by canonists. The feudalistic system too has contributed its share to this process. The crusades which are the product of the later middle ages too tried to establish extensive territories for the protection even at the cost of some of the Oriental Churches which existed there. The period of Western colonialism also reveal a similar history and attitude. When the Indian government requested the rulers of Portugal to allow peacefully to integrate Goa into India the reply was that Goa belonged to Portugal! An interesting ecclesiastical argument was also raised that the Portuguese presence in Goa was essential for the support of the Church in India! All these facts reveal how the Kingdom of God has been distorted into man's Kingdom and that the spheres of His will and dominion into the realms of human domination! It is our prayer and wish that all Churches may evangelize freely in a spirit of co-operation in full harmony with the rich diversity of the Indian culture. Let there be priests or bishops anywhere as many as needed! As long as they maintain the Christian spirit of unity and evangelical zeal, claims of jurisdictions and obstruction of legitimate freedom will never arise. The only solution seems to be the readiness to return to the very sources of the Church where we find the Trinitarian unity maintained in the distinction of three Persons. The Church of God which consists of those who are baptized into the life of the Trinity cannot project its authentic image except through the principle of unity in diversity maintained in the bond of charity.

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#### Foot notes

1. For the texts of the speeches on the question of interritual relations, made at the C. B. C. I. sessions at Trichinopoly, see *Christian Orient* (CO) Vol. III, Nos 1-2, 1982, pp. 5-59.

2. Neill & Schmandt, *History of the Catholic Church*, Milwaukee, 1957, p. 134.

3. Colman J. Barry, (ed) *Readings in Church History*, Vol. I, Westminster, 1964, pp. 465-467.
4. Cfr. Koodapuzha Xavier, "Inter-ecclesial relations: An assessment...." CO, Vol. IV, (1983) p. 6
5. This printed document with the title "*Latin-Oriental Relations and the Mission of the Church in India*" has 115 pages including eight enclosures. Hereafter MLBI.
6. OE 2.
7. OE 1
8. UR 14
9. UR 15
10. UR 17
11. UR 2
12. Placid J. Podipara, *The Rise and Decline of the Indian Church of the Thomas Christians*, OIRSI, Kottayam, 1979, p. 56.
13. Koodapuzha Xavier, 'The Structural Evolution in the Church', *Jeevadhara*, Vol. I, (1971), pp. 315-332.
14. 2 Cor. 4,5
15. Yves Congar, *Power and poverty in the Church*, (tr. by Jennifer Nicholson) London, 1965, p. 43.
16. Koodapuzha Xavier, *Thirusabhacharithram* (ed) Malayalam Kottayam, 1974, p. 244.
17. Koodapuzha, X. "Inter - ecclesial ..." art. cit. p.8
18. Yves Congar, *Power and Poverty* .... op. cit. p. 47
19. Cfr. St. Augustine, Ep. 21 (PL 33, 88).
20. Yves Congar. *ib.*, pp. 61-62.
21. *Ib* p. 64.
22. *Ib* p. 68.
23. McNamara Kevin, *Vatican II The Constitution on the Church*, London, 1968, p. 182.
24. Van Noort *Christ's Church*, Cork, 1961, pp. 59-97.
25. Koodapuzha Xavier, *Inter - ecclesial* ... art. cit, p.9.
26. Podipara P. J. *The Thomas Christians*, London, 1970, pp. 69-70.
27. Koodapuzha Xavier, *Bharathasabhacharithram* (Malayalam). Kottayam, 1980, p. 205.
28. Vanchipurackal Kurian, 'The Malabar Church and Evangelization Work', in *Consultation on Evangelization and Oriental Churches in India*, Vadavathoor, 1973, p: 78.



29. Chediath G.& Vellilamthadam T., "*One Territory, one Bishop, One Jurisdiction- Solution to the Problems?*", CO, Vol.IV (1983) p.15.
30. Podipara P.J., Thomas Christians.. op.cit.p.152.
31. Paremakal Thomas, *Varthamanapusthakam* (Malayalam), Athirampuzha, 1936,p.244.
32. M.O.Joseph, *Thachil Mathoo Tharakan* (Malayalam)' Kottayam 1961,238.
33. *Canons of Diamper* (Malayalam) published by K.N. Daniel Tiruvalla, 1952,p.201
34. Cfr. CO, Vol.3, (1982) pp.43,63.
35. Koodapuzha Xavier, *Bharathasabhacharithram*, (Malayalam), Kottayam, 1980,pp.613 - 16
36. I Jn 1, 1 - 3.
37. See the following commentaries of the *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*: Johannes Hoeck, *Documents of Vatican II* ed. by Herbert Vorgrimler (London 1967) p. 315. Victor Pospishil, *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, (New York 1965)pp. 13 - 14. W.M.Abbott, *The Documents of Vatican II* (London 1966) p. 374, foot note 7.
38. Archbishop Henry D'Souza, art. cit., CO, Vol.III' (1982)p.45.
39. Chediath G. & Vellilamthadam T. art.cit., CO (1983) p.17.
40. Ibidem p.18.
41. OE 4.
42. MLBI p.23.
43. Chediath G.& Vellilamthadam, art. cit. p. 23.
44. Archbishop Henry D'Souza, art.cit. pp.43 - 44.
45. MLBI, p.17. Bishop Thannikott A. of Verapoly (see Enclosure No. 3 pp. 95 - 97) brings out a list of the 'grievances' of the Latins!
46. OE 5
47. Paul Hacker points out some of the erroneous trends which are evident in the so called indianization advocated by D.S. Amalorpavadass and some others Cfr. *Theological Foundations of Evangelization*, Steyler Verlag, St. Augustin, Koln, 1980, pp. 79-100.
48. Cfr. Havell E.B. *History of Aryan Rule in India*, London, 1918, p.129; also Koodapuzha Xavier, *The Indian Church of the Thomas Christian's*, in CO. Vol. I, 1980, pp. 22 - 27.
49. Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, New Delhi, 1981, p.71.
50. Pondicherry, Karackal, Mahe, Chandranagar etc were French colonies.
51. MLBI p. 55.

# Problems and Prospects of Evangelization in India: an Ecumenical Perspective

## Introduction

We have in India three Individual Catholic Churches: the ancient Apostolic Church of the Thomas Christians ( the Syro-Malabar Church ), the Latin Church from the 16th century onwards, and the Malankara Catholic Church since the historic Reunion of Mar Ivanios, Metropolitan of Bethany, in 1930. There are a few non-Catholic Churches of both the Eastern and Western traditions in India: the Jacobite Church, since 1665 with the arrival of Mar Gregorios, the Jacobite bishop of Jerusalem; the Orthodox Church since 1912, the Marthomite Church since the Synod of Mulanthuruthy in 1887 under the Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch; the Church of South India (CSI), the Church of North India (CNI), the Church of the East or the Nestorian Church of Trichur since 1908. There are several other minor ecclesial communities and churches. Among all the Churches in India, the Church of the Thomas Christians (the Syro-Malabar Church) is the most ancient one; most of the other churches were separated from this church at one or other period of history.

In India the latin Church is extended territorially throughout India, while the other two (oriental) churches, are restricted to a little above 0.47% of the Indian subcontinent<sup>1</sup>. The latin Church in India calls India "a latin territory"<sup>2</sup> and hinder the legitimate rights of the Orientals to look after their own faithful outside the restricted area and of evangelization<sup>3</sup>. The Jacobite, the Orthodox, the Marthomite, the CSI and the CNI do not have such restrictions and they look after their own faithful wherever they are, and are doing mission work. Thus they have parishes in the South East Asian countries, in the West Asian countries, in Africa, Europe and America<sup>4</sup>.

## Ecumenism

We require no definition of Ecumenism. Our present era

could be spoken of as the era of ecumenism, or the era of convergence. The Second Vatican Council has given clear directives which should guide the Catholics in their ecumenical endeavours<sup>5</sup>. The Catholic Church has established a Secretariat for Christian Unity and this Secretariate is taking initiative in order to enter into dialogue with the various Churches and communities of Western and Eastern traditions. One can find very active ecumenical discussions at the local, national and international levels and will be amazed at the amount of ecumenical statements among the churches. All these show the activity of the Spirit in the churches and the openness and understanding, sincerity and genuine Christian concern of the Catholic Church and the other churches.

### Unity and Dialogue

In recent years, the Catholic Church has come to a better realization that true unity can be attained only in an atmosphere of loving dialogue which does not involve any hiding of the truth; on the contrary, with brotherly charity, every one must be ready to speak the truth frankly, avoiding all unworthy compromises. Such a dialogue requires mutual acceptance, total openness, and sincere readiness to investigate the truth in the full evangelical sense. It does not mean that churches should maintain dialogue at the expense of truth. At the same time their equality must be kept intact.

### Unity in Diversity

All the recent ecumenical initiatives and discussions of the Catholic Church are based on the basic principle of "unity in diversity". The Catholic Church is prepared to accept non-Catholic Churches as they are, maintaining the unity of Faith. Vatican II clearly teaches it<sup>7</sup>. It has been the constant teaching of the recent Popes. We cite here below a few examples from their pronouncements. Pope Paul VI said in 1964, "Each nation received the good seed of their (Apostles') preaching according to its own mentality and culture. Each local Church grew with its own personality, its own customs, its own manner of celebrating the same mysteries without any resultant injury to the unity of faith or to the communion



of all in charity and respect for the order established by Christ. This is the origin of our diversity in unity, of our catholicity which is always an essential note in the Church of Christ and of which the Holy Spirit is granting us a new experience in our own times and in the Council”.

“Just as unity is not Catholic unless it fully respects the lawful diversity of each one, so also diversity is not Catholic unless it respects unity, serves charity and contributes to the building up of the holy People of God.”<sup>8</sup>

Again “while unity of faith is required for full communion diversity of usages is not an obstacle to it—on the contrary! Did not St. Irenaeus who ‘bore his name well, since he was a pacifier, both in name and by his activities’ say that diversity of usages confirms the accord of faith? And as the great doctor of the African Church, Augustine, looked upon diversity of usage as one of the reasons for the beauty of the Church of Christ.”<sup>9</sup>

In 1973, in its General Report, the Secretariate for Christian Unity said, “True unity diversifies. Diversity forms part of the richness of the faith. Plurality is licit within the necessary unity.” Again, “the plurality discussed in this report, far from being simply multiplicity, is organic; it is the diversity of a unity, and remains within that unity... In this perspective there appears the role of the Universal Ministry of Unity. This is one of the basic aspects of the Apostolic ministry of the successor of Peter. *The Holy Father not only has the task of safeguarding unity, but also that of maintaining legitimate differences within this unity...* At the level of the universal ministry of unity, the Church is only just beginning to be aware of these legitimate diversities in the different situations that present themselves... True unity is at the heart of diversity. True diversity is only justifiable within a unity that is communicable in a certain sense to all.”<sup>10</sup>

In his speech to a Coptic delegation, Pope John Paul II said, “Fundamental to this dialogue is the recognition that the richness of this unity in faith and spiritual life has to be expressed in diversity of forms. Unity whether on the universal level or the local level does not mean uniformity or absorption of one group by another.”<sup>11</sup>

The Pope said further, "For full unity, we must all accustom ourselves to having a mentality mutually open to the Eastern tradition and to the Western one... One cannot breathe as a Christian, indeed I would say as a Catholic, with only one lung; you need to have two lungs, the Eastern and the Western... the differences of traditions and culture will prove the mutual completion of a common witness... Oneness in faith lies at the roots and fertilizes Christian life. Given that, there can be rich variety in growth".<sup>12</sup>

The recent Popes have done a great service to the cause of Christian unity by emphatically upholding the principle of diversifying unity. They did so by bringing to light the long forgotten teachings of Irenaeus, Augustine and the other Fathers of the Church and the established tradition of the first millennium.

### Division and Diversity

There is a real division or separation between Catholics and non-Catholics. They are in the process of becoming one Church of Christ. In their origin and their end they are one. In their pilgrimage they are divided; they cannot participate from the same table of the Lord. Ecumenism is an honest attempt to bring together these divided Christians to the one Eucharistic table of the Lord. The division causes scandal and people in the missions are confused because of the division. Such is the case between the Catholics and the non-Catholics in India.

It is not the case with the various Individual Churches in the Catholic communion. They all participate in the same eucharistic table of the same Lord. They all have the same sacraments and the same faith. They all accept the Bishop of Rome, the Successor of Peter, as the visible sign of Christian unity.<sup>13</sup> Such are the three Catholic Churches in India. If any one is scandalized by the diversity in unity in the Indian Catholic ecclesial life, the only possibility is to educate him to live as an authentic catholic in a diversified unity and a "pluralistic society". Unfortunately, there are some Latin bishops in India who consider the diversity in the Catholic church as a "division" among the Christians. They cannot tolerate the Individual Eastern Churches: "The introduction, in the Catholic Church, of multiple jurisdiction in areas

where so far there has been one jurisdiction only, would result in further accentuating the image of division which Christianity projects... The impression of division would be created in the minds of non-Christians, who are not expected to know the difference between distinct rites (sic.) in mutual communion and churches separated from each other."<sup>14</sup>

"Any departure from the fundamental principle, one territory, one bishop, one jurisdiction would be highly detrimental to church unity and the preaching and witnessing of the God News."<sup>15</sup>

We cannot help feeling really sorry for such sentiments of the Latin bishops in India. The non-Christians should be educated and should be able to distinguish between diversity and division. The agents of the "One Rite Movement"<sup>16</sup> in India, particularly in Kerala, were systematically proposing the idea that diversity is division. The responsible ecclesiastical leadership neither inside nor outside India takes any serious step against such anticonciliar ideas. On the contrary, many were advocating such an idea. In their "Memorandum" to the Holy Father the Latin Bishops were advocating the very same sentiments.

### **Oriental Catholic Proposition**

In the ecclesial and ecumenical context in India the Orientals would like to propose the following: There is real and true unity in the Catholic Church; this genuine Christian concept of unity includes legitimate diversity. This diversity is not a superficial difference in the externals only. We believe in the unity of faith and plurality of expressions. Uniformity is superficial. It can apparently appear as Catholic and can put on the mask of a spirituality. But it cannot maintain the unity envisaged by Christ. Uniformity cannot command the attention of the non-Catholics much less the non-Christians. They stand for plurality and diversity. Hence ecumenism can take place only on the basis of the principle: "unity in essentials, and diversity in all the rest". An ecclesiology which keeps the balance between unity and diversity should be developed. That will be an organic ecclesiology. A readiness to accept the diverse realities within the Church is a must. No ecumenism will thrive in the colonial, unjust and domineering life-



situation. Sooner or later' it is bound to fail, because it is not based on evangelical values.

### Ecumenism in the Indian Context

The attitudes and statements of the Indian latin hierarchy are totally detrimental to ecumenism.<sup>17</sup> Ecumenism thrives where there is mutual acceptance and respect, individually and collectively. Some of the Latin Bishops in India have a possessing and pontificating attitude, which has created a threat to the very cause of ecumenism in India.

The non-Catholics in India are watching what the Latins are doing to the Oriental Catholics. If two Oriental Catholic Churches in India are treated by some of the Latins as unavoidable evil, just tolerated as second class churches, appendices to the Latin Church, how can they dialogue with the Latin Church?<sup>18</sup> When they find that the Eastern Churches in India in communion with Rome cannot administer the essential pastoral care for their own faithful outside the narrow restricted territory and are unjustly hindered from organic growth, suppressed and subjugated by the Latins, will they even think of a union with a Latin dominated Catholic Church?<sup>19</sup> When they see that a Church with 2,500,000 (Malabar Catholics) and another with 290,000 (Malankara Catholics) faithful are simply ignored and disregarded by the Latins, how can ecumenical work progress in India? When they find that the Malabar Catholic Church which contributes almost 70% of the missionaries in India is told by the Latins that the Orientals are not missionary-oriented<sup>20</sup> and that they have no right to evangelize, but in the Latin rite,<sup>21</sup> when this church is asked to prove that it is missionary by converting the remaining non-Catholics in Kerala,<sup>22</sup> how can the non-Catholics trust the Latins? When the Latin Church in India repeatedly affirm: 1) that "one territory, one bishop, one jurisdiction" is to be upheld in India;<sup>23</sup> 2) that unity means uniformity; 3) that diversity is division; 4) that the Orientals do not have the right to cater to the pastoral needs of their faithful;<sup>24</sup> 5) that the Orientals need do missionary work through the Latin Church and for the Latin Church and in their own Oriental way because these Churches are ethnic realities;<sup>25</sup> 6) that the Oriental Churches in India should be the constant feeder of

vocations for the Latin Church;<sup>26</sup> 7) and that India is a "Latin territory"<sup>27</sup> how can the non-Catholic Churches dare to join that Church which is working as the agent of oppression? When they find that the Latins are distorting the documents of Rome<sup>28</sup> and spreading false accusations against the Orientals, how can the non-Catholics believe them? When they find that the agreement reached by Rome and the Oriental Catholic Churches are not respected today, in India, how can they dare for future agreements?

The Eastern Churches in communion with Rome are test-cases for the Orthodox.<sup>29</sup> People who are ventilating anti-ecumenical views are doing great harm to the ecumenical spirit of the Catholic Church and are counterwitnessing to the openness exhibited by the Second Vatican Council and the recent Popes. But unfortunately this is what one finds in some of the official circles like the CBCI. Some of the Latin bishops in India still hold on to a pre-Vatican ecclesiology<sup>30</sup>. For them the Catholic Church is the Latin Church. They speak of India as "Latin territory". They may be speaking of a lesson our Lord did not teach; the Lord of the Church said, "my kingdom is not of this world" (Jn 18:36).

## Two Jesuit Scholars

G. A. Maloney S. J. and P. Achutegui S. J. have spoken of the peculiar attitude still prevalent among some of the Latin ecclesiastics. Maloney says: "Those Orthodox who did accept the primacy of the Pope... gradually found that their traditions, promised by Rome to be respected and preserved, to be usually suppressed in favour of the Western usage. Only one ecclesiology of a monarchical nature was allowed. The synodal and autonomous manner of operating among such non-Roman local churches was subsumed into complete obedience to Rome, enforced by latin canon law and a congregation for Eastern Churches to govern such Churches. ... True love begins with respect for the other, and a certain amount of trust in the Spirit of God that if diversity is allowed instead of uniformity, pluralism instead of static legalism, the Roman Church will not collapse. Rather the Pope may just be very surprised that both East and West have something to offer the other."<sup>31</sup>

Achutegui says: "A great majority, not to say almost all of Roman Catholic missionaries of the Latin Rite are with a strong background of Western civilization. Its very dynamism and vitality has often led them to unconsciously act as if the Latin Western Rite were the only form of Christianity. Putting the accent on unity, the different legitimate and traditional forms of expressing religious realities have been easily passed over as non-existing, contrary to specific and repeated teachings of the Popes. Many Catholics have a real difficulty in understanding the very existence of Catholic Eastern Rites. In other words, there has been a certain lack of understanding in the practical sphere of what unity is and what the exigencies of adaptation - or better "inculturation" are. The recent pronouncements of Vatican II in this respect are illuminating and bound to open a new era."

"But if many people have difficulty in conceiving the unity of the Church without reducing it to, or confusing it with, uniformity, when Catholic forms of Christianity are involved, can we expect an attitude of understanding for the doctrine, liturgy and ways of life of Christian communities separated from Rome?"

"A clear teaching of Vatican II emphasizes the fact that different forms of cult, different expressions of non-Christian religions, and different values of cultures in the peoples to be evangelized should be properly understood, levated to a genuine Christian level, and "canonized" after the proper screening. A fortiori, a similar attitude should be fostered towards the separated brethren, their churches, their works of evangelization."<sup>32</sup>

If this is true, how much more should be the care the latins have towards the Eastern Churches! Through their recent comments and Memorandum and Papers, the Indian Latin hierarchy has very much offended the feelings of the Orientals in India. Their sarcastic and condemnatory verdicts on the Orientals have created an ecumenical scandal<sup>33</sup>. Any sensible and open-minded theologian can see the Oriental view-point. Some of the Latin Bishops do not want to accept the permanent existence of the Oriental Churches in India. They want to explain away the clear teachings of Vatican II regarding the Orientals.



## Observations

From the ecumenical point of view, one is forced to assert that the Latin Church in India is unconcerned to ecumenism. At present, there is not even a separate commission for it. India may be the only country having this situation. The attitude of the Latins towards the oriental Catholics is unecumenical. So the Orientals do not have any faith in the inter-ecclesial discussions, not even in the discussions between the theologians. The Latins, it seems, want some how to prolong the discussions and are not prepared to accept the teachings of Vatican II. They have even come forward with a new interpretation of the Vatican Decree on the Eastern Churches (OE).<sup>34</sup> They are making statements which a civil ruler will not utter under the Indian Constitution.

Now the questions one may ask are the following:

- 1) Are we sincere in our ecumenical discussions?
- 2) Are we prepared to accept plurality and diversity in the life of the Church or are we upholding that unity is uniformity and diversity is division?
- 3) Do we believe in ecumenism?
- 4) In the ecumenical era, can we legitimately uphold the outdated principle, "one territory, one bishop, one jurisdiction"?
- 5) In a vast country like India, is it not legitimate to permit all Catholic and non-Catholic Christian traditions to foster, so that the non-Christians may have a chance to come into contact with the various forms of Christianity?
- 6) Here is it not sinful not to permit the Indians to come to know about the various forms of Christianity, especially when these forms exist in India and are more suitable to the Indian soil?
- 7) Is it not against the Indian Constitution to prevent the legitimate Christian traditions from freely propagating their forms of worship? Should the Christians dare to do something contrary to the Indian Constitution?

The success or failure of ecumenism and evangelization in India depends on the answer to these questions!

Geevarghese Chediath  
Thomas Vellilamthadam

## Foot notes

1. Cf. V.F. Vineeth, *Justice and Reconciliation. The Sad but Living Story of a Church in Fetters*, Bangalore, 1983.

2. The Orientals find it difficult to justify this appellation. After all the Indian territory belongs to the Republic of India and not to any religious community. Of course, under the Indian constitution the Latins also are entitled to proclaim the Gospel everywhere in India. It does not mean that anybody has authority over the Indian territories. Recently the Indian Latin Bishops have sent a Memorandum to the Holy Father and in that document one finds the appellation "Latin territory" profusely.

3. Cf. G. Chediath, "Unity versus Uniformity - An Ecumenical Question", *Christian Orient*, II, 4 (1981), p. 141-164; G. Chediath & T. Vellilamthadam, "One Territory, One Bishop, One jurisdiction - Solution to the Problems?" *Christian Orient*, IV, 1 (1983), p. 12-30.

4. Cf. Nikolaus Wyrwoll (ed.) *Orthodoxia 1982*, Regensburg, p. 101-103.

5. Cf. also "Directory Concerning Ecumenical Matters: Part I" Secretariate for Christian Unity, *Ad Totam Ecclesiam*, 14 May, 1967); Austin Flannery, ed. *Vatican Council II*, Bombay, 1975, p. 440-456; "Declaration on the Position of the Catholic Church on the Celebration of the Eucharist in common by Christians of different Confessions", (Secretariate for Christian Unity, 7 January 1970): A. Flannery, *ibid.* p. 456-460; "Apostolic Letter on Mixed Marriages" in *ibid.* p. 461-466; "Directory Concerning Ecumenical Matters: Part II: Ecumenism in Higher Education", *ibid.* p. 467-82 "Reflections and Suggestions Concerning Ecumenical Dialogue", (Secretariate for Christian Unity, 15 August 1970), in *ibid.* p. 484-501.

6. R.L. Stewart, "I want to serve Unity - Pope John Paul II and Ecumenism", *One in Christ*, vol. 17,3 (1981), p. 281.

7. Decree on Ecumenism, art. 14.

8. Cf. J. L. Gonzales et alii, (compilers), *The Sixteen Documents of Vatican II*, p. 673

9. *Information Service*, 23, 1 (1974), p. 8.

10. *ibid.* p. 10.12.

11. R.L. Stewart, *art. cit.* p. 283.

12. *Ibid.* Cf. also, "Address of Pope John Paul II to the Eastern Catholic Bishops of the United States", on November 23, 1978; *Diakonia*, 14, 1 (1979), p. 83-84.

13. Commenting on OE Archbishop Charles De Provencheres of Aix-en-Provence (France) said in 1964 in the Council, "Along with the Latin Church, the Oriental Churches manifest the Catholicity of the Church by their patrimony of liturgy, spirituality, theology and ecclesiastical institutions. We Latins need the example of these churches in our efforts to renew the Catholic Church. Its mission is universal today and so we must welcome the efforts of the Oriental Churches toward a greater share in this mission. They have a special vocation today to promote unity." (J.L. Gonzales *op. cit.* p. 674).

14. "Latin-Oriental Relations and the Mission of the Church in India: A Document submitted by the Latin Bishops of India to His Holiness Pope John Paul II" (*Memorandum*). No date is given. It expresses the Latin views on the Orientals and the Mission work in India and other things. Its tone is anti-Oriental; ecclesiologically it is very unsound. It represents a Pre-Vatican ecclesiology and an outdated mentality. But in the Council speaking on the Decree OE, Bishop Vittorio Costantini of Sessa Aurunca (Italy) said in 1964, "The Oriental Churches should be urged to greater organized effort to make known to the rest of the world the riches of their religious and historical patrimony" (J. L. Gonzales, *op. cit.* p. 674).

15. *Ibid.* p. 52.

16. *Vaidikamilram.*

17. Cf. *Memorandum.*

18. Cf. Bishop Anthony Thannikot, "Problems arisen in Kerala from Multiple Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction in the same Region", in *Memorandum*, p 95-97.

19. Cf. The Report of the Apostolic Visitor submitted to the Holy Father; Commenting on the Decree on the Oriental Churches (OE) Jaime de Barros Cardinal Camera, Archbishop of Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) said in the Council, "The Council should avoid giving the impression that it is concerned only with those of the Oriental faithful who actually live in the Orient. There are millions of them living in other countries and dispersed among Latin Catholics. In Brazil alone, there are faithful of eight Oriental Rites, "(*The Sixteen Documents of Vatican II*, compiled by J.L. Gonzales et alii, Boston (Mass.), p. 674. Archbishop Neophyte Edelby (Melkite)



said, in 1964: "It is important to study the organic concept of the Church, as opposed to what might be called the atomic or cellular concept. It is also necessary to set up the Oriental hierarchy wherever the good of the souls so demands as a vital means of safeguarding the patrimony and the traditions of the Oriental Churches (J. L. Gonzales, *op. cit.* p. 675).

Cf. G. Chediath, & T. Vellilamthadam, *art. cit.* p. 26

20. Henry D'Souza, "Latin - Oriental Relationships in the Church in India", *Christian Orient*, 3, 1-2 (1982), p 44: "The Marthomites, the Jacobites, are not doing missionary work. In fact, the tradition of Oriental Churches is not missionary .. The Oriental tradition has not been missionary." London, 1967, p. 371-388 Bishop Vittorio Costantini said in 1964 in the Council, "Efforts should be made to reanimate in the Churches of the East the ancient missionary spirit *for which they were known*." (J. L. Gonzales, *op. cit.* p. 674). Bishop Vittorio, a man in the West knows the Orientals and their past history better than Archbishop Henry D'Souza, a man in an Eastern country, among the Easterners.

21. *Memorandum*. p. 33ff.

22. Henry D'Souza, *art. cit.* p. 43.

23. It is the basic argument of the "Memorandum". It was one of the objectives of the "Church in India Seminar" (All India Seminar); It is the main objective of the monthly Vaidikamitram.

24. P. Puthenangady, sdb, Ecclesial versus ecclesiastical", *The New Leader*. vol. 93, 12 (March 27, 1983), p. 6.

25. Henry D'Souza, *art. cit.* p. 40.

26. *Ibid.* p. 38: "The Latin bishops realise the potential of the Oriental Church", *Memorandum*.

27. *Memorandum*.

28. Cf. The Letter of His Eminence Joseph Cardinal Parecattil on Dec. 7, 1982 to His Grace Most Rev. Simon Pimenta, President of the CBCI: Letter No. C9/ S22/ BP64/ 82, p. 4-5.

29. Cf. Antonios Vakondios, "Our Double Vocation: Testimony and Reminder. The Hellenic Catholic Church in Greece", in J. Madey, *The Future of the Oriental Catholic Churches*, Tiruvalla, 1979, p. 215-6.

30. Cf. *Memorandum*.

31. G. A. Maloney, "Re-union and Pope John Paul II," (editorial), *Diakonia*, 15, 1 (1980), p. 2-4.

32. P. S. de Achutegui, "Ecumenism and Vatican II", (Cardinal Bea Studies, III). Manila, 1972, p. 125. 126.
33. *Memorandum*,
34. *ib*, p. 2ff.

## Apostolicity and the Individual Churches

'Apostolicity' is a theological question which is most closely linked with the essence and the historical existence of the Church. It is also a question of vital importance to the faith of the Church and the exercise of her mission. Hence it is only natural that the question of apostolicity has been made an object of study and discussion in India where we have the Catholic communion of three Individual Churches: the Latin, Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara Churches. The theme of apostolicity gains greater importance at present in the context of the discussions on the pastoral care of the emigrants of the Oriental Churches in the so called Latin territories and on the missionary obligation of the Oriental Churches in India.

Somehow, the position of the Oriental Churches in India in this regard has been misunderstood and misinterpreted even by certain theologians. A clear example is the article of Felix Wilfred, in *Vidyajyoti*, August 1982<sup>1</sup>. In this context a clarification of the question of apostolicity is highly necessary. The following is a humble attempt to look into this question once again, hoping that it will throw some light on this issue.

### Apostolicity: fundamental to the Church

Though the New Testament witnesses speak in different ways of the 'apostles'<sup>2</sup> they were all convinced that the existence of the

apostles had a fundamental meaning for the Church. Paul placed such a decisive stress on the fact that he is an apostle (Rom 1:15) and he defended his apostolate against all who wished to contend this claim. Even though Luke is pursuing his own theological line in describing the institution and the activity of the 'twelve apostles', he is still speaking to communities for whom this apostolic foundation, the perseverance in the teaching of the apostles (Acts 4:42) and the direction of the early community at Jerusalem by the apostles, are realities of considerable importance. The importance of the apostolic foundation is affirmed also by the author of the Epistle to the Ephesians: "You are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles" (Eph 2:19-20). It is also significant that in a quite different field of early Christian theology the names of the 'twelve apostles' are given to the twelve foundation stones of the celestial Jerusalem (Rev. 21:14). Here the twelve apostles are given both an ecclesiological and eschatological significance. Even in John, where there is no direct reference to 'apostles', what we mean by 'apostolicity' appears more pointedly than in other writings<sup>3</sup>.

### **Apostle versus Apostolic College**

This significance and foundational character of the 'apostles' for the Church is to be understood in a collegial sense, namely, in so far as the apostles formed one body or college. It is in their unity as a body with one undivided Gospel message and with the same mission, that they continue to be the foundation on which the Church is built with Christ as the cornerstone (Eph 2:20). This collegial character of the twelve is evident in the New Testament. The various lists of the Twelve<sup>4</sup>, the special instructions of Jesus to them<sup>5</sup>, the special table-fellowship with them at the Last Supper (Jn 13:1-30) are all indications of the importance of the collegiality of the apostles.

### **The Collegiality of the Christ-experience**

The apostles had experienced Christ as a group. Apart from the fact that Jesus during his life time made them a group and took them along with him, taught them and worked his miracles



in their presence, after his resurrection he appeared to them for giving the apostolic commission also when they were gathered together as a group. The post-resurrection appearance is recorded in all the Gospels as a group experience.<sup>6</sup> The Christ-experience that the Apostle John describes in his Epistle is also presented as a communitarian experience: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands concerning the word of life ..." (1 Jn 1:1-3). Hence there is no doubt that there is no Christ-experience that is individualistic, independent or exclusive of the experience of the group of the twelve which forms the basis of the reality of the Church.

### **Individuality of the Christ-experience:**

However, we cannot close our eyes to the fact that the community is formed of individuals and experience is essentially though not exclusively subjective. There is no community without individuals and there is no authentic communitarian experience without authentic individual experience. This individual or personal dimension is basic to every experience that is genuinely human. Therefore the unity and variety are essential features of any and every genuine human group experience. If the Apostolic Christ-experience is a genuine human experience we have to admit the above mentioned features of unity and variety in this experience too.

### **The variety of the apostolic commissioning**

The four gospels themselves witness to these essential features of Christ-experience. Though all the apostles experienced the same Christ and accepted the same Gospel and that as a group, when they communicated their experience the gospel took different forms. Thus we have today four canonical gospels though all of them present the same Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is true that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is not exhausted by any of the four written gospels or the traditions they represent. It is the mutual complementarity of the different gospel traditions that enables us to have a wholistic picture of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

This unity and difference are evident in all the gospel materials presenting the words and deeds of Jesus which the

apostles experienced. This is particularly conspicuous in the post-resurrection appearance of Jesus and apostolic commissioning which was decisive for their apostolic experience. In the Gospel of Mark the apostolic commissioning takes the form of "preaching the gospel to the whole creation" (Mk 16:15), while in the Gospel of Matthew it takes the form of "making disciples of all nations" (Mt 28:19). In Luke it takes the form of "preaching repentance and forgiveness of sins to all nations" (Lk 24:47), while in John it takes the form of "forgiving and retaining the sins of any" (Jn 20:23).

There is no doubt that the particular ecclesial traditions (*sitz im Leben*) form the background of these varied forms of presenting the same apostolic experience and commissioning of the same Gospel in these concrete forms. Hence the message of the apostles though in its totality is above particular ecclesial traditions is at the same time concretely immanent in particular ecclesial traditions. We cannot think of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the abstract but only as accepted and lived by the apostles and the Churches founded on them. Therefore collegiality and individuality should go hand in hand when we consider the apostolicity of the Church.

### **The Individual Church and the Church of God**

The indivisibility between collegiality and individuality can be seen in the very concept of the Church. Each individual Church is not the whole Church, but none the less fully represents it: this means two things. Firstly, the individual Church is not a 'section' or a 'province' of the whole Church. It is in no way to be seen as a sub-division of the real 'Church', which as the wider unit must therefore be regarded as senior in rank and more important. It is an unfortunate fact that the word 'Church' is habitually used to describe the whole Church. This is the consequence of an abstract concept of the Church, as though the Church were not wholly present in every individual Church, endowed with the entire promise of the Gospel and an entire faith, having present in it an undivided Christ and enriched by the undivided Holy Spirit. No, the individual Church does not merely belong to the Church. The individual Church is the Church. The whole Church can only be understood

in terms of the individual churches. Strictly speaking the Universal Church has no concrete existence outside the individual churches. Secondly the whole Church is not a collection or association of individual Churches. The New Testament data show that the term 'Church' is used to describe the various individual communities and that both singular and plural forms are variously used. Even though the relationship between the individual Churches and the whole Church is not laid down, either theologically or juridically, in the New Testament, it is certain that the individual Churches are united by more than mere external union, by more than an organization which is superior to the individual churches. The church is not a limited company or organization of individual churches. The church is not made by adding together the individual churches, nor can it be broken down into them. Rather, the Church of God exists in each individual church. Each individual church, however small or insignificant, is a full and perfect manifestation of the Church of God.

### **Church: the Body of Christ**

Explicit statements concerning the *ecclesia* are found in the Epistles of St Paul to the Colossians and the Ephesians. In Col. 1:24 the 'ecclesia' is the *soma Christou*, the body of Christ. In Col. 1:18 Christ is the *kephale*, the head of this body. Similar statements are found in Eph 1:22 and 5:23. It is worth noting that in Eph 3:21 and 5:32 'Christ' and the 'Church' are mentioned in juxtaposition.

The reference seems to be to co-ordination and subordination. The figurative language is not strictly logical. Christ is the Church herself (the body). Yet Christ is also above the Church as her head. Obviously the statements are closely interwoven. If according to Rom 12:4f and 1 Cor 12:12f, Christians as (members of) the body stand in relation to one another, it is in Christ that this relation exists. It is no mere human fellowship. One can never grasp the nature or meaning of the assembly of God in Christ in terms of a sociologically defined concept of society. The decisive point is the fellowship with Christ. He is the head, of whose body the church is.

In this figure we can see the illustration of the description that the Universal Church is the communion between the indivi-

dual Churches. Christ is immanent in each individual Church, and therefore each individual Church is the body of Christ. Saul who persecuted the Church in Judea, Galilee and Samaria, persecuted Christ (cf. Acts 9:1-6). However the body of Christ is not exhausted by one or another individual Church. As Christ is also the head transcending the body, the Church also transcends the individual Churches. Whereas the individual Church, is wholly the Church, it is not the whole Church. The mystery of the church is both immanent and transcends it. Therefore, an individual church that turns in upon herself would defeat the very purpose of her existence. She realizes the mystery of the Church in so far as she remains open to the transcendent church by being in communion with other individual Churches.

All the above considerations show that the collegial character of apostolicity, or the fact that the church is founded on the apostles does not go against the apostolicity of the individual Church<sup>7</sup>.

### **Apostolicity and the Mission**

Because of the complex investigation into the concept of the apostle, the theological enquiry into apostolicity is also not very simple. However, the literal sense of 'apostle' can give us the first clue. The term 'apostle' means 'envoy' and unmistakably it conveys the idea of 'mission'. In the christian usage it denotes mission instigated by Jesus Christ. This is the distinctive mark of the Christian apostle. For Paul it is only through his mission from the risen and glorified Lord that his apostolic awareness is meaningful. This should be seen as the real constitutive mission for the apostles also. The true sending out which founds the Church and its mission comes only from the risen Lord. It is only when the sending out of the apostles by the risen Lord is related to the task of the church in leading the nations to the Lordship of Christ, until he returns in glory, that the fundamental and permanent significance of the apostolic ministry is understood. Therefore, the apostolic character is conferred on the Church, first of all, because God's Word is alive in her through the apostolic message<sup>8</sup>.



## **Apostolicity and Authority**

When one studies certain words of Jesus to the twelve, we can see that there is also a transmission of authority. The words 'binding and loosing' in Mt 18:18 and 'forgiving and retaining sin' in Jn 20:23 are significant in this respect. The great closing passage of Matthew's Gospel must also be mentioned here. It speaks of the full power of the risen and glorified Lord, who gives authoritative orders to the disciples: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations". (Mt 28:18-20) All these words indicate a mandate to mission and at the same time a transmission of his authority. If we put together all the commission passages of the risen Christ and compare them, their wording proclaims an 'ecclesiological' Church founding meaning<sup>9</sup>. The risen Christ established in his Lordship transmits to the Apostles along with the mission to preach the Gospel a much more extensive power. They are to share in the power which he himself has received from God. This, then, must be the true principle of apostolicity: a mission with full authority, the continuation of Christ's own mission.

## **Bestowal of the Spirit**

Another moment in the transmission of the apostolic authority is the bestowal of the Spirit. Though it is described in different ways in the New Testament, the Holy Spirit remains as the dynamic factor in the fulfilment of this apostolic mission. It is after breathing his Spirit into the disciples that the Risen Christ entrust them with the apostolic power.

## **Apostolic Succession**

To clarify the meaning of apostolicity for the Church today we must be clear about the nature of the apostolic succession. For this we must recognise what was essential for the early Church and what moved the church later to call itself apostolic.

The apostolic succession is not simply an unbroken chain in the occupation of an episcopal see; nor is it a mere fact of sacramental validity. Rather, it is succession of faith and its profession.<sup>11</sup> The apostolic ministry is primarily in view of the mission of the Church, namely the proclamation of the Gospel or the ministry of the Word, which is accepted in faith. Church is the community of those who have accepted in faith the Gospel or the Word proclaimed by the Apostles. "Those who received his 'word' were baptized, and there were added that day about three

thousand souls. And they devoted themselves to the apostles 'teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers,' (Acts 2: 41-42) Hence the apostolic succession belongs to the whole Church and has manifested itself in manifold ways throughout the centuries and in all countries in the continuous process of baptizing and being baptized, through faith, and obedience to the apostolic testimony and the proclamation of the Word through the community of worship and in the Eucharist and in the fellowship and unity of the Churches of the whole world. It is primarily a question of awakening again and again the faith that was first awakened through the original testimony of the apostles, and of making this faith known and proclaimed in the Church.

### **The Church and the Word**

The Church lives by the Word and finds her identity in ministering to it. It is practically identical with the Church. In the Acts of the Apostles we read that "the Word grew" or "increased" in places where actually it is a reference to the 'growth' or 'increase' of the Church.<sup>12</sup> This identification of the Word with the Church can be compared with the identification of the *Logos* with Christ in Jn 1. Whatever the *Logos* meant and stood for was present in Christ. "The *Logos* was made flesh and dwelt among us." (Jn 1:14) In the same way the deepest identity of the Church is to be found in the Word and its power.

### **The Word: written and oral**

It is the whole people of God that preserves the Word or the Gospel. The Church as a whole, as a body, celebrates and lives the Word or the Truth received from the Apostles. The whole Church is apostolic. The Word or the Truth revealed in Jesus Christ and received from the Apostles therefore comes to us through the two sources written and oral: Bible and Tradition. Even the written source, the Bible has to be received in the living community of faith in the Church. Hence the Word of God is enshrined in a pre-eminent manner in the living faith traditions of the Church.

Even St Paul who is *par excellence* the Apostle set apart for the ministry of the Word depends entirely on the *kerygma*

(1 Cor 15:2-7), liturgy (1 Cor 11:23-25; 16:22; Gal 4:6; Rom 8:15; Gal 1:5), hymns (Phil 2:6-11, Col 1:15-20), confessional formulas (1 Cor 12:3) and theological terminology (1 Thes 4:1-12; 1 Cor 6:9-10) of the early Church. At times Paul speaks of 'handing down' what he has received (1 Cor 11:2, 23; 15:1,3). He appeals to the customs of the Churches (1 Cor 11:16) and recommends fidelity to tradition (1 Cor 11:2). All the above data indicate that the Word or the Gospel that Paul preached was simply the proclamation of his life in the Church. The word does not exist in the abstract but concretely in the liturgical, spiritual and disciplinary faith expressions of the Church. Therefore our proclamation of the word, to be authentic, should be in harmony with those ecclesial faith expressions.

### **Liturgy: the most important faith expression**

The Liturgy is no doubt the most important way in which the Church expresses her faith. Here the Church lives at full stretch and in its purest form<sup>13</sup>. The Church celebrates its mysteries and expresses its faith through this celebration. This is the reason why the different Individual Churches are mainly characterized by their liturgies. Hence we can understand the identification between the 'Rites' and 'Individual Churches'. So the 'Rite' is not to be limited to the liturgy of the Church. Though the liturgy becomes the culminating expression of faith, there are other expressions of faith such as the kerygma, catechesis, spirituality, discipline etc. which all together constitute the 'Individual Church'.

### **Divine or Apostolic Tradition and Individual Ecclesial Traditions**

The Word of God or the Divine Tradition in the Catholic Church is enshrined in the Individual Ecclesial Traditions. The Second Vatican Council clearly teaches this. "The Catholic Church values highly the institutions of the Eastern Churches, their liturgical rite, ecclesiastical traditions and their ordering of Christian life. For in those churches, which are distinguished by their venerable antiquity, there is clearly evident the tradition which has come from the Apostles through the Fathers." (O. E. 1) That is why the Eastern Churches are very keenly aware of their apostolic foundations. This explains why they regard themselves as the Churches

of the Fathers, for the Fathers are but continuing the Apostles, inasmuch as the post-apostolic times are in unbroken continuity with the apostolic times. The central importance given to the Fathers is due to the fact that they were exceptional witnesses to the whole apostolic faith.

The Church is apostolic, because she keeps on the Apostolic Tradition, the Christian message which was first oral, hence 'tradition' before being written down. By keeping that 'Rule of Faith' within a broader ecclesiastical tradition, the Church believes that she continues the ministry, the doctrine, the mission of the Apostles. It does not mean that the Apostolic Tradition should identify truth and customs, but rather that it ensures the constant assistance of the Holy Spirit<sup>14</sup>. The Spirit of Truth abides in the Church and makes the Apostolic Tradition an ever rejuvenating deposit.

Now as we said above speaking of the Church, there is no Apostolic Tradition in the abstract but as contained in the existing Individual ecclesial traditions. Hence a christian can authentically proclaim the Word only within a concrete ecclesial tradition. That is why Pope Paul VI insists on the fact that Evangelization is an ecclesial act<sup>15</sup>. It is not a question of imposing private traditions as misrepresented in the article on Apostolicity in *Vidyajyoti*<sup>16</sup>. Hence it is only legitimate and reasonable that each christian lives and proclaims the Word within his individual ecclesial tradition. Thus the Christ-experience or the Apostolic Tradition preserved in the Church becomes normative for living and proclaiming one's faith.

### **Apostolic Succession of Authority**

In order to keep up the apostolic succession of mission, the Church possesses also the apostolic succession of authority. The very words of Jesus in Mt 28: 18-20 are indicative of this: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..." To keep up the apostolic heritage of faith the Church needs the apostolic custodians of faith. It is in this perspective that we can speak of an authority structure in the Church. The succession of faith of the people implies also the succession of persons who give leadership to the community of faith. A people who are united in faith with the specific features of



its expression in liturgy, spirituality and discipline demands a leadership or an authority structure that is homogeneous to the nature of that people.

### **Apostolicity and Jurisdiction**

Here we come to the question of jurisdiction in the Church. The question of jurisdiction or authority structure in the Church can be tackled only within the framework of the faith expressions of that individual Church, since the authority in the Church, is given by God in view of its ministry of the Word enshrined in its faith traditions. Since the most sublime expression of the church as a community of faith is its liturgy, the liturgical head of the Church should constitute also the juridical head of the Church. Jurisdiction is not sought for its own sake. It is meant to help the Church to keep up its authentic existence as a community of apostolic faith and its authentic expressions in the liturgical, spiritual and disciplinary life. Jurisdiction, congenial to the ecclesial tradition, therefore, is an indispensable factor for an authentic existence of any individual Church in the Catholic Communion.

### **Apostolicity and Complementarity**

No Church may regard itself or let itself be regarded as simply a part. Even if it is a very small Church or lives on the fringe of the world, it must not surrender anything of the dignity, freedom and independence which it has received through Christ and which it has to perfect and maintain in community with him. But at the same time it must not behave as if it were an isolated entity existing for itself alone. It must be open to all other Churches, so that every Church may be able to recognise, understand and appreciate in every other the presence of the one and only Church of God<sup>17</sup>. In this way every Church shares responsibility for every other Church.

The foundation of this communion or complementarity characteristic of the Church of God lies in the mission of Christ entrusted to us through his Apostles. The complementary structure fundamental to the Church is based on the relationship

between Jesus and his Apostles. This relationship reflects in the complementary structure between the Bishops of one Individual Church, their presbyterium and faithful, on the one hand, and between the different individual Churches on the other. This complementary structure does not call the community into question but rather makes it possible<sup>12</sup>. Thus Apostolicity implies also Catholicity.

### Identity, Change and Norm

\* If the Apostolic faith is the basis of the identity of the Church, and this faith is enshrined in the individual ecclesial traditions then we confront the question as regards the identity of the Church and its normative character, because the individual ecclesial traditions have undergone modifications in the course of history. The changes are inevitable because the mission of the Apostles develops in the Church beyond what the apostles themselves did, and is directed to a fulfilment which the Church and all mankind are still travelling towards. However, it would be necessary to verify the extent to which the idea of mission justifies the actual changes which have taken place in the course of history, and whether the changes were part of an organic growth. Whatever changes it has undergone, there should be the element of apostolic faith that should remain normative for its life and proclamation.

Here comes in the decisively important role of the Spirit. Jesus Christ who was present among the Twelve is now present in the Church through his Spirit. His Spirit is the Spirit of Truth that leads into all Truth (Jn, 16:13). He gives life to the traditions of the Individual Church which the believers constitute, and in the communion between the Individual Churches. The Spirit of Jesus Christ becomes the principle of unity and variety giving the Church a unity which can absorb differences without obliterating them and a universality that is always concrete. The Spirit gives also the continuity between the 'Old' and 'New' in the evolutionary process of growth in the Church. Thus Jesus Christ becomes the guarantor of the Church's identity, and therefore also of the normative character of its faith traditions.

## Conclusion

From the above analysis may we draw the following conclusions: Apostolicity is a fundamental attribute of any and every Individual Church. The collegiality of the Apostles and its significance for the Church as a whole does not go against the apostolicity of the Individual Church. Rather, the collegiality only adds to the value of the apostolicity of the Individual Churches.

Apostolicity is primarily a question of faith in the Church and therefore the apostolic succession of persons (ministry) is subordinated to the apostolic succession of faith (Word) in the Church. The Church exists precisely for the Ministry of the Word.

Since the 'Word' is enshrined in the living faith traditions of the Individual Churches, Apostolicity is essentially constitutive of those faith traditions expressed in the Liturgy, Spirituality and Discipline of the Individual Churches.

Since Apostolicity implies also a succession of authority in view of an authentic preservation of the faith of the Church enshrined in that particular form of ecclesial life, it demands an authority structure congenial to the Individual ecclesial traditions (cf O. E. 5)

Since the faith experience in the Church is concretely mediated through the faith expressions of Individual Churches, those faith traditions have a normative value for living and proclaiming one's christian faith, recognising the evolutionary process in them involving identity and change through the Spirit of Truth who abides in the Church.

The faith tradition of any Individual Church does not exhaust the apostolic faith experience and cannot stand independent by itself. The apostolicity implies catholicity and therefore the authentic existence of the Church of God is concretely realized in a wonderful unity, harmony and complementarity among the Individual Churches in the Catholic Communion, which will consequently be the visible sign of the life of the Triune God on earth.

## Foot notes

1. Cf. Felix Wilfred, "Church founded by an Apostle or on the Apostles?" *Vidyajyoti*, 46 (1982), 314-326.
2. Cf. R. Schnackenburg, "Apostolicity: The present position of studies" *One in Christ* (1970), 243-273 in which he makes an assessment of the recent studies on the concept of Apostle in the New Testament.
3. Cf. F. Mussner, "Die Johanneischen Parakletspruche und die apostolische Tradition" *BZ N. F.* 5 (1961), 56-70
4. Mk 3:16; Mt 10:2; Lk 6:14; Acts 1:13
5. Mk 4:11; Lk 12:35-48; 17:22-32
6. Cf. Mt 28:16-20; Mk 16:14-20; Lk 24:44-53; Jn 20:19-23
7. For a detailed study of the apostolicity of the Individual Church, cf. E. Lanne OSB., "The Local Church: its catholicity and Apostolicity", *One in Christ*, 1970, 288-313
8. Cf. O. Karrer, in *Lex. fur Theologie und Kirche* 1, Freiburg Br., 1957, col. 765
9. Cf. A. Vogtle, "Ekklesiologische Auftragsworte des Auferstandenen", *Sacra Pagina* II, Paris-Gembloux, 1959, 280-294
10. Cf. Lk 24:47-49; Acts 1:8; 2:1-14; Jn 20:22f
11. Cf. Y. Congar, "Composantes et idee de la succession Apostolique" in *Oecumenica* (1966), 61-80 where he describes apostolic succession as a succession in the Gospel and in doctrine.
12. Acts 6:7; 11:24; 13:49; 19:20
13. Cf. Y. Congar, "Towards a Catholic Synthesis", *Concilium* 1981, (71).
14. Cf. E.R. Hambye, *Dimensions of Eastern Christianity*, Vadavathoor 1983, 22.
15. Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 14
16. Cf. art. cit. pp. 321-326
17. Cf. M. Vellanićkal, "Biblical Theology of the Individual Churches", *Christian Orient* 1 (1980), 8-9 where he deals with the transcendent and immanent aspects of the Church.
18. Cf. K. Stalder, "How does the Church remain in Truth? An Old Catholic Response" in *Concilium*, 148 (8/1981), 43-44.



# Some Aspects of the Problem of Rites

The bishops of India have not lost faith in the dialogue of rites in spite of the fact that little headway has been made in their meetings in Tiruchirappalli and Bombay and no final solution seems to be in sight.<sup>1</sup> As a fresh effort, an inter-ritual committee was set up at the Bombay meeting with new terms of reference. The theologians who were up to now behind the scene are going to be directly involved in the dialogue and we can only hope that a speedy solution may be found to this problem which vexes the Church in India for the past few years.

This essay wants to be a small contribution to the dialogue that is in the process. Evidently the historical, juridical, theological and pastoral aspects of this issue of rites cannot be dealt with adequately in these few pages. We shall therefore limit ourselves to highlight certain aspects which need further reflection and study.

## A Point in Ecclesiology

From the theological point of view, two things seem to be central to the Orientals: a) The apostolic Christ-experience which they claim to possess in virtue of their connections with St. Thomas. On this basis the Oriental churches are to be taken, according to them, as *normative*<sup>2</sup> for the other churches in India. b) The Church is a communion of individual churches or rites.<sup>3</sup>

We have dealt with the first point elsewhere.<sup>4</sup> Here we propose to examine briefly in the light of the teachings of Vat. II, the truth of the second statement.

Vatican II has moved away from the concept of an universalistic ecclesiology wherein the Church was considered a spatial extension of a whole divided into various units after the model of an empire or a state<sup>5</sup>. At the same time the Council has not endorsed the conception of the Church as a kind of federation of local churches. While avoiding the pitfalls in these two types of ecclesiology which have characterized the Western and Eastern traditions respectively, the Council has laid emphasis on what ought to be

central in any understanding of the Church. The Church is in the first place a *mystery of faith*. It is the reality of the people who are called in Christ by God and are offered in him a new life which they receive in faith and celebrate in the sacraments.

A particular church is a concrete realization or articulation of the mystery of faith which the Church is. The whole Church as the mystery of the new covenant is in every particular church in such a way that the latter could never be considered a mere part of the former.<sup>6</sup> In the concrete, both the Constitution on the Church and the Liturgy mean by particular church fundamentally and primarily a community of the faithful under the guidance of a bishop. The unique type of relationship between the Universal Church and a particular church as also the relationship among the particular churches and among the members of one particular church, can be understood in no better way than by the term which tradition has consecrated and expressed: *communion*.

Of this bond of communion by which the entire Church is organically united, the bishop is the guarantor in his particular church where he continues the ministry of the apostles and functions as witness to their faith. The college of bishops is the expression of the communion of all the particular churches represented in their bishops. All this is something that pertains to the very constitutive nature of the Church itself. *Lumen Gentium* after dealing with the theme of the college of bishops in no. 22, speaks of particular church in the sense described above.

"The individual bishop, however, is the visible principle and foundation of the unity in his particular church, fashioned after the model of the Universal Church. *In and from such individual churches there comes into being the one and only Catholic Church*. For this reason each individual bishop represents his own church, but all of them together in union with the pope represent the entire Church joined in the bond of peace, love and unity." (LG 23)

The same understanding of particular or individual church is strikingly manifest in the Decree on the Pastoral Office of the Bishops when it defines a diocese:

"A diocese is that *portion* of God's people which is entrusted to a bishop to be shepherded by him with the co-operation of the presbytery. Adhering thus to its pastor and gathered together by him in the Holy Spirit through the gospel and the Eucharist, *this portion constitutes a particular church* in which the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church of Christ is present and operative." (CD 11)

It is from this basic theological vision of the Church as Universal and particular with the undergirding communion structure of individual bishop-college, that we have to interpret all other instances in the Council documents where the expression particular Church is employed, as for example, in the decree on Eastern Catholic churches.

The Church living in history and subject to various political and socio-cultural situations, has known in her encounter with peoples a variety of articulations and realizations of her mystery. In past centuries sometimes particular churches each headed by its own bishop, forged themselves into one group so as to form a Patriarchate or rite with a characteristic common tradition, liturgy and ecclesiastical discipline.<sup>7</sup> Such groupings had their centres of unity. The political importance of Constantinople, the sacred character of Jerusalem, the importance of Antioch and Alexandria for the spread of Christianity and their connections with some apostles, were all factors which led to the emergence of Patriarchates and rites. These various groups which have their own rich spiritual heritage and liturgical traditions are also called individual churches in the document on Eastern Catholic Churches (no. 2).

Such groups, however, do not form part of the constitutive *structure* of the Church as the particular church represented by the individual bishop and the college representing all the individual churches do. They are *intermediary structures* and contingent in nature but with strong roots in tradition.<sup>8</sup> Similar to these traditional intermediary structures we can also have contemporary structures, as for example various Bishops Conferences. Here the basis is provided by the homogeneous socio-cultural milieu or the political unity of a country or a wider region. A group of bishops united in a Conference act jointly and face common pastoral problems "in the service of the common good of the churches" (CD 37). *Lumen Gentium* after speak-

ing of collegiality (no. 22) and after considering the relationship of the individual churches headed by the bishops to the Universal Church places *within this theological framework* the intermediary structures as Patriarchates and today's episcopal bodies (LG 23).

The Council makes it clear that these structures do not belong to the essential and constitutional nature of the Church when it speaks of the Patriarchates as having come about by '*divine providence*' (*divina autem providentia*). This is striking if we contrast it with the constitution of the college of bishops which according to the council proceeds from the will of Christ himself (LG 22: *Statuente Domino....*).

All what we have said leads us to admit unhesitatingly that Church is truly a communion of particular or individual churches. These particular or individual churches are primarily and fundamentally the congregation of the faithful under the guidance of the bishop. But what the Orientals mean by communion of individual churches is the communion of various rites. Their understanding therefore refers only to the *intermediary structure* and their statement cannot mean theologically much different from saying, for example, that the Church is a communion of all national or regional churches represented by the bishops' conferences (which are also intermediary structures).

The Orientals speak of the Church as a communion of individual churches or rites in so far as these trace back their origin to one or other apostle. If so Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara churches have proceeded from St. Thomas, and the Latin church from St. Peter. Should this be the basis and criterion, then the Universal Church would be the communion of twelve individual churches or rites—church of Jude, church of Mathew, church of Simon, the Zealot etc., each one possessing the specific Christ-experience of the respective apostle. Apart from the fact that we are not in a position to group the churches into twelve in this way, for the simple reason that about some of the apostles we know little more than their names—not to speak of their churches, the whole thing can hardly pass for sound theology nor can this way of understanding Church as communion find any serious support



in tradition. Even the Oriental Fathers by communion of churches do not mean the communion of various rites.<sup>9</sup> This perspective of rites was far removed from their vision and concern.

The apostles formed into one body or a college and this is of constitutive significance for the Church whereby her structure continues to be *collegial*. A particular church is formed in a determined socio-cultural milieu and the people respond to the message of the Gospel transmitted by the apostles as a body. The Church is the communion of all these particular or individual churches.

The churches which have, to use the expression of the Council, 'coalesced' into various groups in the past to form Patriarchates or rites, are certainly an enrichment to the whole Church and therefore their distinctive tradition, liturgy, spiritual heritage and ecclesiastical discipline are to be respected and promoted. The Council was solicitous that the Eastern churches 'flourish and execute with new apostolic vigour the task entrusted to them' (OE 1.).

Besides upholding their dignity, thus correcting wrong attitudes of the past, the Council also disposed appropriate measures for the preservation and growth of the Eastern churches or rites some of which were in danger of losing their identity since its members were found scattered in tiny and isolated groups all over the world. This spirit of the Council has to be kept in mind.<sup>10</sup>

The Oriental rites rich as they are in their tradition, do not however exhaust the mystery which the Church is. She cannot be reduced to these rites deriving from the past history. Therefore the Council looking to the future and envisaging the mission fields speaks of the formation of young churches rooted in the culture and heritage of the peoples. The decree on the Missionary Activity has dedicated the entire chapter III to consider the question of particular churches which should spring from the word of God in the new soils. "The seed which is the Word of God sprouts from the good ground watered by divine dew. From this ground the seed draws nourishing elements which it transforms and assimilates into itself. Finally it bears much fruit. Thus, in imitation of the plan of incarnation, the young churches, rooted in Christ and built up on the foundation of the apostles, take

to themselves in a wonderful exchange all the riches of the nations which were given to Christ as an inheritance..." (AG 22). These churches will manifest the richness of the Gospel unexplored by the rites of older origin.

The missionary duty of the older churches is not simply to reproduce themselves in new areas but to facilitate the emergence of young churches with their own specific characteristics. What is important is that the same process which led to the formation of various churches in the past take place also today.

In the Conciliar documents we find on the one hand a *vision* on the formation of young particular churches. On the other hand there is also a manifest *concern* to safeguard the rich heritage of the Eastern churches of older origin. Both the vision and the concern of Vatican I are to be kept in mind in finding a solution to the current problem of rites whether be it the question of immigrants or the questions of evangelization in the responsive areas of the country. To this we should add also a third and important consideration, namely concrete *pastoral situation* of the country and the missionary context of today's India.

As for evangelization, from what we have said it follows that a self-emptying, *kenosis* of the rites after the economy of incarnation is an absolute requisite. This is all the more required today when the people of the various regions of North India are being awakened to a new consciousness of their self-identity and they resist stoutly the introduction of anything that would alienate them from their culture or will represent a domination.

Though the Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara churches have a rich heritage, they also are, however, conditioned by many factors. Some of the restraints as the ethnic character are serious ones and therefore they need to be examined and studied before finding a solution to the problem of rites.

### **Ethnic Dimension of the Oriental Churches of India**

The Orientals in India have been practically identified with a particular ethnic group in Kerala who are popularly referred to as Syrian Christians. In the course of the centuries they have

adapted themselves to the caste system prevailing in the society. Held together by common racial, linguistic and cultural ties, they form today a caste apart.

The Syrians claim superiority on the basis that they descend from the high castes - Brahmins, Nambudhiris and Nairs. "Like the high caste Hindus of the country, the Thomas Christians would not touch or go near those of lower castes. In case they happened to do this, they would purify themselves by a bath. In public roads the lower castes had to give way to them, and they had right to kill any one, even a Nair, who would deny them this mark of distinction."<sup>11</sup>

As a proof of this superior ancestry they adduce the fact that they have many customs and manners still prevalent among them which resemble closely those of the superior castes of Kerala. For example they were used to feed a new-born baby with powdered gold in honey and make the child write alphabets with its finger on husked rice.

The Syrians group itself is divided into two sub-castes: The *Northists* and the *Southists*. There are many stories as to the origin of these groups. One such is that, the *Southists*, unlike the *Northists*, are said to have descended from the legitimate wife of the Syrian migrant Thomas of Cana who came to India in the IV century and have preserved through endogamy the purity of blood.<sup>12</sup>

The Syrians care to distinguish themselves particularly from the Latin Christians who are considered by them as belonging to low castes. The conflicts and rivalries over rites in Kerala in the past and in the contemporary times are not without a tint of this caste reality. What strikes us particularly is the fact that the Syrians have been very reluctant to admit into their fold converts from lower castes. In a noteworthy study Dr. Paul Thenayan, the editor of *Satydeepam* and himself a Syro-Malabar priest, writes: "Since the Thomas Christians were living as an isolated *caste community*, they were peacefully coexisting with other Hindu communities and there was no problem within the Church, as they all formed one caste community....It is rather unfortunate that this kind of attitude in various forms *still persist* in the Church obstructing the way of a communitarian witness to Christ. Even when the European

missionaries had begun and had made great success in mission work, the 'Thomas Christians' were still reluctant to enter the field. *They did not even let the new converts made by the missionaries enter their churches...*<sup>13</sup>

It was deplorable that a diocese—Kottayam had to be created exclusively for the Southists and therefore on pure ethnic grounds. Equally unfortunate was the fact that a Latin diocese of Vijayapuram had to be established to accommodate lower caste converts who were not welcome in the neighbouring Syrian diocese. In recent years there has been a new spurt of missionary initiatives by the Orientals, as for example, among the Nadars of the Kanyakumari district. But how far are these new converts really accepted and integrated into their church-fold is a question which needs study. It would appear that a new convert can never be a Syrian Christian which is a matter of origin, of social status, and communal identity.

The ethnic reality of the Orientals and their communal attitudes cause justifiable apprehension as to how far the missionary enterprises of the Oriental churches in responsive areas of the country could really contribute to the birth of the local churches rooted in their culture as envisaged by the Council. As a matter of fact, in some places of the Central, the North and the North-Eastern regions of India, where the Syrian missionaries have been working, the local people have begun to react strongly against their presence.<sup>14</sup> Through the historical process that is in the making in the country at large, these people have come to a new awareness of their identity and potentialities. They see in the presence of any powerful alien ethnic group a threat to their economic and cultural independence.

We do not want to underestimate the contribution made by the Syrian priests and religious to the missionary activity in the Central, Northern and North Eastern regions. The resourcefulness of the Oriental churches is out of question. At a time when there was acute shortage of Church personnel in these regions, they left behind their native Kerala, kith and kin and volunteered in large numbers to serve in various fields—educational, medical, social and the like. But we should also admit that the caste reality of the Orientals and the inherent ethnic propensities have had their



repercussions in the missionary activities. In many of these places the Syrian missionaries have given the impression of being a dominant ethnic group by their association with powerful institutions and of profiting their influence to induct more and more of their kinsmen from Kerala into the region for employment. All this has forced the bishops who once zealously recruited vocations from Kerala to be reluctant to do so today.

### History in Perspective

The identification of the Oriental rites in India with a particular ethnic group of Kerala had its effects also on their relationship to the Latin rite and its missionaries. Resentments from the past history are carried over to the present and kept alive unmindful of the new developments in the situation of the Church and of the country. One goes today to the point of employing the categories of Paulo Freire and referring to the Latin rite as the oppressor and the Oriental rites as the oppressed. There is a sense of victimization in the Orientals and a feeling that they have been all through object of injustice perpetrated by the Latins.

Since the past history conditions very much the attitude of the Thomas Christians towards the Latins, we should at this juncture make some remarks in order to place the events of the past in proper perspective. One should readily concede that factors other than merely religious intervened in the relationship of the Portuguese in the XVII century with Thomas Christians.<sup>15</sup> However, one cannot bypass, as it is done today, two very consequential facts which explain to a great extent the straining of relationship between the Latin missionaries and the Orientals: The Oriental church in Kerala was infected by Nestorianism, and the Nestorian formulae in use among them found place also in their liturgical books. Besides, for long centuries the Oriental church in Kerala was governed by prelates sent by the Church of Persia which was not in communion with Rome until a fraction group reestablished relationship with Rome by getting Simon Sulauqua appointed by Pope Julius III as their Patriarch.

Today there seems to be an all-out effort to explain away plausibly the Nestorian connections and even to gloss over it. We

are aware that we are treading on a very sensitive ground. But facts of history cannot be obliterated. Even E. Tisserant who was certainly not known to have been a person against the interests of the Orientals, would admit the Nestorian connections.<sup>16</sup>

As for communion with Rome, one way of ascertaining the truth is to inquire about it of the non-Catholic Orientals of Kerala who share centuries of common history with the Catholic Orientals. In this regard no less a scholar than Paul Verghese of the Orthodox Church writes: "If there is one statement which is more incredible and mainly the result of question begging than the assertion that the Malabar Church was always directly under the West Syrians until 1490, it is the assertion that the Malabar Church was always in the Roman obedience till the 'Revolt of the Coonen Cross' in 1643."<sup>17</sup>

From here we can understand better, if not approve fully, the reactions of the missionaries of the XVII century who took measures to rid the church of the Nestorian elements and to ensure communion with Rome. The Synod of Diamper despite its negative aspects was, however, an expression of the concern of the missionaries – a concern which was real.

It was the danger of relapse of the people into Nestorian heresy that prompted the missionaries and Portuguese authorities to prevent the arrival of bishops from Persia. To safeguard the faith of the Malabar Christians and to guarantee the unity of the church often disrupted by the presence of rival bishops from Persia claiming the same status,<sup>18</sup> the Holy See adopted the policy of appointing Latin rite bishops. Though this step was necessitated by circumstances, yet the Holy See was careful to respect the heritage and traditions of the people. This is borne out by the fact that Francis Roz S. J., the first bishop appointed by Pope Clement VIII in 1599, was a man in great sympathy with the people and he knew their history, traditions and their liturgical language-Syriac.

### **The Spirit of Chaldeism**

Besides the ethnic dimension and the feelings of resentment against the Latins, we have a third element to consider: The spirit

of Chaldeism is permeating today among the Orientals. The Syro-Malabar rite wants to go back to the pure Chaldean elements and preserve them in India as intact as possible. But one easily forgets that we live among a people whose culture is much different from that of Chaldea and still more from the Chaldea of the Middle Ages. The Council Vat. II has paved the way to inculturation and it is sad that in the post-conciliar period one should reverse the movement set by the Council and adopt archaic ways that have little to do with the culture of our country. Cardinal Parecattil writes in this regard: "Moreover so long as her liturgy is not fully Indian, we cannot say that the Syro-Malabar Church is Indian 'in every respect'... If the liturgy has not sunk its roots deeply into the local culture, esteemed as such by the public at large, it remains alien, despite its long and centuries-old existence in the country."<sup>19</sup> How much will the Syro-Malabar rite which seems to be set on the path of renewing, in its life and liturgy, the Chaldean traditions and culture, be inclined to promote young churches rooted in their own culture in the mission areas? This is a question which should be seriously pondered over.

In the concrete, given the ethnic character, the strong resentments against the Latin rite and the spirit of Chaldeism among the Orientals, one wonders whether double and triple jurisdiction will not lead to unhealthy competitions in the mission areas where unity of witness is the need of the hour. The legitimate right and duty of preaching the Gospel do not call for multiple jurisdiction. Institutional and hierarchical presence in a territory is not the most important thing in evangelization which is much deeper than that. If we are willing to learn the lessons history teaches us, it should be clear that double jurisdiction is not in the interests of the Church in India. The Orientals are not denied their legitimate right in this regard (OE 3). It is borne out by the fact that the bishops of Madhya Pradesh came forward to share territories with the Orientals which led in the course of time to the formation of exarchates and eparchies. All these arrangements were made with agreement on the principle 'one territory-one Ordinary.'<sup>20</sup> Along the same lines further territories can be shared by the Orientals after a study of the present condition obtaining in these localities being made which will help to adopt suitable mission policies in future.

## Pastoral Care of the Immigrants

The pastoral care of the members of one rite residing in the territory under the guidance of a bishop of another rite is a question which would require much more consideration than space would permit us here. We can only briefly touch upon this problem.

The concern of the Council for the Orientals is seen in the way it has made provisions for the immigrants so that they do not suffer spiritual damage in their new environment. In its decree on the Eastern Churches it speaks of even constituting parishes and hierarchies with the clause 'where the spiritual good of the faithful demands it'. In the decree on the Pastoral Office of the Bishops where the Council deals more concretely with diocesan boundaries and pastoral care, it proposes various alternatives:

"For the same reasons, where there are faithful of a different rite, the diocesan bishop should provide for their spiritual needs either through priests or parishes of that rite or through an episcopal vicar endowed with the necessary faculties. Wherever it is fitting, the latter should also have episcopal rank. Or, the Ordinary himself may perform the office of an Ordinary of different rites. *If for certain reasons, these arrangements are not feasible in the eyes of the Apostolic See, then a proper hierarchy for the different rites is to be established.*" (CD 23) As is very clear from this text, the Council did not propose the constitution of ritual hierarchies as the only way to solve the problem of immigrants. Pastoral care can be done in various ways and the establishment of separate hierarchy is contemplated only as a last resort solution, if all others should be found inadequate. The post-Conciliar document *Regimini Ecclesiae* too considers the case of separate hierarchy only where 'the number of the faithful and *circumstances (adjuncta)* require it'.<sup>21</sup>

If the Council considered the establishment of separate hierarchy as a last resort, there should be reasons for that. "One territory - one bishop" is an age-old principle in the Church whose soundness is confirmed by experience. Multiple jurisdiction has been viewed only as an exceptional means. This is so not in the Western tradition alone but it is equally true among the Orientals. Fr. I. Zuzek, Secretary for the revision of the Oriental Code, in an enlightening article has made very clear this point.<sup>22</sup> Even the



Patriarch Athenagoras I considered multiple jurisdiction as an 'extreme economy'.<sup>23</sup>

Some Oriental theologians like Xavier Koodapuzha seem to think that 'one territory - one bishop' is an 'outdated principle'.<sup>24</sup> But we wish to point out that every good law in the Church should be inspired by sound theology. 'One territory one bishop' is not a mere juridical question. Through this is underlined the unity of the people of God residing in a particular place (in Corinth, in Rome, in Delhi, in Bombay) in spite of their racial, linguistic, cultural and economic differences. The Church of God is the gathering of the faithful called together to live and witness their faith in true fellowship and service under the guidance of a leader continuing the ministry of the apostles. This unity and fellowship is guaranteed by the principle 'one territory - one bishop'. To accept this principle is to accept the theology common both to the Oriental and to the Western tradition. The theologico-juridical principle of 'one territory - one bishop' can be in effect practised in India without compromising the pastoral care of any group belonging to any particular rite. One should try out the various alternatives the Council has given before opting for the extreme and last resort of the establishment of a separate hierarchy.

There are certain socio-economic problems which are common to any immigrants in big cities independent of whether he is from Tamilnadu, Kerala or Andhra Pradesh. Some of them, especially the poor sections, may not expect in cities the same economic support they received from the Church and priests in their native villages. This applies to the Orientals as well. It has to be proved that the Orientals receive less attention and are discriminated. But the fact is that the Orientals are one of the best cared for groups in our big cities. In the pastoral care further improvement is always possible. Therefore the bishops of the place where the immigrants are found and the bishops of their original place could dialogue on this matter.

To conclude, there is a strong tendency in the Church in India today to view everything from the narrow angle of rites. May be it is a sign that the Church is getting alienated from the people and their real problems. This issue has seriously handicapped the CBCI and has notably impaired its unity. Many vital

issues do not receive today in this body the attention they deserve.

How did this problem of rite arise all on a sudden in the present form is a pertinent question. But now that it has arisen, we cannot simply set it aside. We have to dialogue without losing heart till a viable solution is found, so that freed from these tangles, the Church in India can channel her energies to more serious and pressing issues that affect the lives of millions of our countrymen.

Felix Wilfred

### References

1. Cf. The report on the meeting of the sub-committee on rites held in Ernakulam on 18 & 19 June, 1982 in *Report of the CBCI Standing Committee*, Delhi October 16-17, 1982 pp. 54-63; On Bombay meeting cf. *Examiner* January 15, 1983.
2. Paper presented by Cyril Mar Baselios at the Tiruchirapalli General Meeting, in *Latin-Oriental Relationship in India*. CBCI Centre, Delhi, 1982 p. 31
3. Cf. The proposal made by the Oriental bishops at the Ernakulam meeting in *Report of the Standing Committee* Delhi, October 16-17, 1982, p. 57
4. Felix Wilfred, Church founded by an Apostle or on the Apostles? in *Vidyajyoti* 46 (1982) pp. 314-326.
5. Cf. O. Rousseau, La constitution *Lumen Gentium* dans le cadre des mouvements renovateurs de theologie et de pastorale des dernieres decades, in *L'Eglise de Vatican II*, vol. II, ed. by G. Barauna, Les Editions du Cerf, Paris 1966, pp. 35-56; Ch. Moeller, Le ferment des idees dans l'elaboration de la constitution, *ibid.* pp. 85-120; cf. also Y. Congar, De la communion des Eglises a une ecclesiologie de l'Eglise universelle, in *L'Episcopat et l'Eglise Universelle*, Les Editions du Cerf, Paris 1962, pp. 227-260
6. Cf. H. De Lubac, *Les Eglises particulieres dans l'Eglise universelle*, Aubier Montaigne, Paris 1971, pp. 29-56; E. Lanne, *L'Eglise*

locale: sa catholicité et son apostolicité, in *Istina* 14 (1969) pp. 46-66; Wolfgang Beinert, Die Una Catholica und die Partikularkirchen, in *Theologie und Philosophie* 42 (1967) pp. 1-21.

7. Cf. Cyrille Vogel, Unité de l'Eglise et pluralité des formes historiques d'organisation ecclésiastique du III<sup>e</sup> au IV<sup>e</sup> siècle, in *L'Episcopat et l'Eglise universelle*, pp. cit. pp. 591-636; K. Morsdorf, Patriarch, in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* vol 8, Herder, Freiburg, cols. 174-177; W. De Vries, *Orient et Occident*, Les structures ecclésiales vues dans l'histoire des sept premiers conciles oécuméniques, Les Editions du Cerf, Paris 1971; G. Philips, *L'Eglise et son mystère au II<sup>e</sup> Concile du Vatican*, vol. II, Desclee Paris 1967, pp. 306ff.
8. Cf. G. Philips, *op. cit.* pp. 313-316; H. De Lubac, *op. cit.*
9. Cf. J. B. Chethimattam, The Church as the Communion of Churches according to the Oriental Fathers, in *Jeevadhara* 7 (1977), pp. 358-367.
10. Cf. *Latin-Oriental Relations and the Mission of the Church in India*: A document submitted by the Latin Bishops of India to His Holiness Pope John Paul II, 1982. The document is printed in book-form for private circulation.
11. J. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, St. Paul's publications, Bombay, 1970, p. 83; cf. also J. Mundadan, *Traditions of the St. Thomas Christians*, Bangalore 1970.; J. Aertthyl, *The Spiritual Heritage of the St. Thomas Christians*, Dharmaram Publications, Bangalore p. 982, pp. 51-54
12. Cf. E. Tisserant, Syro-Malabare (Eglise) in *Dictionnaire de Theologie Catholique*, vol. XIV, Paris 1941, cols. 3089ff; George Koilparampil, *Caste in the Catholic Community in Kerala*, Cochin 1982.
13. Paul Thenayan, *The Missionary Consciousness of the St. Thomas Christians*, Viani Publications, Cochin 1982, p. 129.
14. The social context and missionary situation of the Church in North India is analyzed in the document submitted by the Latin Bishops of India to Pope John Paul II, nos. 70-150
15. Cf. J. Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India*, Vol. II, CHAI, Bangalore, 1982, pp. 19ff.

16. E. Tisserant, Syro-Malabare (Eglise) in *op. cit.* vol XIV, col, 3094; ID., Nestorienne (Eglise) *ibid.* vol. XI. cols. 195ff (L'etablissement Nesoriens dans l'Inde).
17. Paul Verghese, The Church in Kerala at the coming of the Portuguese, in *The Thomas Christian Encyclopedia of India*, vol. II, edd by George Menachery, Trichur 1973
18. Even as late as the end of XIX century unauthorized bishops with false or forged credentials continued to land in India. We recall here the case of Rokos and Mellus who came in the late part of XIX century and caused divisions in the Syrian Community.
19. Cardinal Parecattil, in his foreword to the book of Paul Thenayan, *op. cit.* p. xix.
20. Cf. *Report of the CBCI General Meeting*, Ernakulam January 7-16, 1970, pp. 80-91
21. *Acta Apostolicæ Sedis* vol. 59 (1967) p. 900. It is sad that the Report of Archbishop Antony Padiyara on the situation of Syro-Malabar Christians outside Kerala, and the proposals of the Oriental Bishops should leave out the important word "the circumstances" (*adjunta*) while quoting the text from *Regimini Ecclesiæ*. The Latin bishops have drawn attention to this fact. cf. Report submitted to His Holiness Pope John Paul II, no. 51.
22. I. Zuzek, The Authority of the Patriarchs outside the Patriarchal territory, in *Vidyajoti* 45 (1981) pp.  
This is an abridged form of the article originally published in *Nuntia* 6 (1978) pp. 3-33
23. I. Zuzek, *ibid.*
24. Xavier Koodapuzha, Inter-Ecclesial Relations - An Assessment of the Interim Agreement of the CBCI, in *Christian Orient* 4 (1983) p. 10; cf. also G. Chediath-T. Vellilamthadam, One territory, one Bishop, one Jurisdiction. Solution to the problems? *ibid.* pp. 12-30.



## Documentation

A study of the ecclesiastical documents reveals that the question regarding the inter-ecclesial relations had arrested the attention of ecclesiastical authorities several times in the past. Despite the various contrary influences the Catholic Church has been constantly defending and promoting the rich diversity within the Catholic communion. But there are instances, as we have in India, where the general directives of the Holy See have not been faithfully followed by all the persons concerned. We give below some of the documents which reveal the mind of the Catholic Church in the inter-ecclesial relations.

Xavier Koodapuzha.

1. Pope Benedict XIV in the "Demandatum" of December 21, 1743 urges that all the venerable and praiseworthy traditions of the Oriental Churches should be preserved without adulteration and be fostered:

"Ut omnia laudabilia Ecclesiae Graecae instituta ab antiqua Patrum traditione derivata et Apostolica comprobatione firmata in suo vigore permaneant atque a fidelibus istius nationis integre executioni tradantur neque aliquid iisdem suggerere aut suadere audeat, quod illorum contemptu atque immunitionem inducere possit; multosque minus auctoritate propria aliquid circa illa innovare, aut etiam super iisdem aliquam dispensationem concedere vel admittere praesumant."

(Cfr. *Codex Juris Canonici Fontes*. Vol. 1, No. 388, p. 80)

2. The Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of Faith in a letter of May 12, 1890, addressed to the Archbishop of Paris says that the Orientals should everywhere follow their own rite and Latin Bishops should not interfere with it: "Si intende peraltro che l'autorità dei vescovi latini sugli orientali ad essi soggetti non si estende a questioni di rito né ad affari riguardanti lo stato monastico di quei sacerdoti che l'avessero abbracciato." (*Collectanea SCPF*, no. 81. p. 40).

3. Pope Leo XIII in the "Orientalium Dignitas" of November 30, 1894 addressed to the Latin Bishops gives clear norms regarding the Orientals in their territories. The Pope says that the membership in a Church is inalienable and hence the Orientals should not be forced to change their ecclesial traditions and that they should be helped to follow their own ecclesial traditions. (Cfr. *Codex Juris Canonici Fontes* Vol. III, n. 627 p. 457).

4. The Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Churches in a letter to the Latin Bishops requests them to be more careful to observe the norms given by Pope Leo XIII in the "Orientalium Dignitas", so that the Orientals may be able to preserve and foster their own traditions and identity everywhere: "Rogat igitur magis magisque eosdem Ordinarios, ut omni zelo, studio, et industria incumbant, ad normam praesertim, Const. "Orientalium Dignitas" No. 9 in curam Orientalium fidelium in suis diocesis commorantium, ut incolumi manente ritu, ecclesias et quidem scholas quatenus fieri possit, pro iis excitandas curent: quod si ii proprias scholas habere, pro rerum adjunctis, non valeant, omni ope admittantur ne illi Orientales quasi coacti sint suos pueros scholis protestanticis aut alienis a sensu Christi committere. Pariter, quinimo praesertim, foveant vocationes ecclesiasticas in filiis indigenis illorum fidelium ritus Orientalis, et curent ut non solum ad pietatem informantur et ecclesiasticis disciplinis imbuantur, sed etiam consulta hac Sacra Congregatione, ut in proprio ritu probe instruantur et in sacris ordinentur; nam iis quoque, ita eruditis et institutis, addictis ad curam spiritualem fidelium suorum Rituum plenius huic curae spirituali prospectum erit, quia eorum opera convenientius erit impensa et propensius accepta." (A. A. S. 1930, p. 101)

5. The official teaching of the Catholic Church is against any latinization. Pope Pius XII declared in 1944 that the Orientals should always maintain their own liturgy and genius and the latinization should be discouraged: "Sit enim necesse est, singulis universis orientalis ritus populis, in rebus omnibus, quae a sua cujusque historia a suoque cujusque ingenio atque indole pendent, legitima libertas, quae tamen a vera et integra Jesus Christi doctrina non discrepet. Idque sciant ac secum reputent tum qui in Catholicae ecclesiae gremio sunt nati, tum qui desiderio ac voto eidem assequendae velificantur: qui etiam omnes noscant ac pro

certo habeant se numquam coactum iri ad proprios legitimos ritus et ab antiquitus sibi tradita instituata cum latinis. ritibus institutisque commutanda; quae quidem omnia, aequali aestimatione aequalique decore habenda, communem matrem Ecclesiam quasi regia circumdant varietate.”

(A. A. S. 1944, p. 137–138)

## Documents of Vatican II

Decree on the Oriental Catholic Churches, art. 1–6 (OE).

Decree on Ecumenism, art. 14; 15; 16; 17 (UR).

Decree on Evangelization, art. 3 (AG).

Constitution on the Church, art. 13; 23 (LG).

Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, art. 4 (SC).

Decree on the Pastoral Office of the Bishops, art. 23 (CD).

**6. OE, art. 1:** The venerable traditions of the Oriental Churches form an integral part of the divine heritage of the Catholic Church. Hence the Church has the obligation to preserve and foster this common patrimony:

“For distinguished as they are by their venerable antiquity, they are bright with that tradition which was handed down from the Apostles through the Fathers, and which form part of the divinely revealed and undivided heritage of the Universal Church.”

**7. OE, art. 2:** The Catholic Church is a communion of individual Churches which have their own heritage:

“That Church, holy and catholic, which is the Mystical Body of Christ, is made up of the faithful who are organically united in the Holy Spirit through the same faith, the same sacraments, and the same government and who, combining into various groups held together by a hierarchy form separate churches or Rites.”

**8. OE, art. 3:** All the Individual Churches have the equal right and obligation to undertake the missionary activities:

“Such Individual Churches whether of the East or of the West, although they differ somewhat among themselves in what are called rites are, nevertheless equally entrusted to the pastoral guidance of the Roman Pontiff, the divinely appointed successor of

St Peter in supreme governance over the Universal Church. They are consequently of equal dignity, so that none of them is superior to the others by reason of rite. They enjoy the same equal rights and are under the same obligations, even with respect to preaching the gospel to the whole world (cf. Mk. 16:15) under the guidance of the Roman Pontiff."

9. **OE, art 4:** In the same territory there could be jurisdictions of more than one Church and hence unity in action is desirable and not uniformity in jurisdiction. Parishes and hierarchy should be established everywhere for the pastoral care of the Oriental Catholics:

*"Therefore attention should everywhere be given to the preservation and growth of each Individual Church. For this purpose, parishes and special hierarchy should be established for each where the spiritual good of the faithful so demands."*

10. **OE, art. 5:** Separate hierarchy with jurisdiction is essential for maintaining the identity of the Oriental Churches:

*"The Council solemnly declares that the Churches of the East, as much as those of the West, fully enjoy the right and are in duty bound to rule themselves."*

11. **UR, art. 16:** The same idea is expressed also in the UR:

*"The Sacred Synod solemnly declares that the Churches of the East while keeping in mind the necessary unity of the whole Church, have the power to govern themselves according to their own disciplines since they are better suited to the temperament of their faithful and better adapted to foster the good of souls."*

12. **OE, art. 6:** The membership to an Individual Church cannot be limited to a certain territory. An Eastern Catholic should everywhere be an authentic member of his mother Church. The decree speaks of the obligation of the Orientals to study, preserve, foster and faithfully follow the Eastern traditions of their own Church.

*"All Eastern Rite members should know and be convinced that they can and should always preserve their lawful liturgical rites and their established way of life and that these should not be altered except by way of an appropriate and organic develop-*



ment. Easterners themselves should honour all these things with the greatest fidelity. Besides they should acquire an ever greater knowledge and a more exact use of them."

Latin Religious Orders of the Latin Church which work among Orientals should form separate houses and provinces of the Oriental Churches.

"Religious societies and associations of the Latin rite working in Eastern countries or among Eastern faithful are earnestly counselled to multiply the success of their apostolic labours by founding houses or even provinces of Eastern rite, as far as this can be done."

13. UR, art. 14: The Apostolic heritage is preserved in different forms and ways through the various Churches:

However, the heritage handed down by the apostles was received in different forms and ways, so that from the very beginnings of the Church it has had a varied development in various places, thanks to a similar variety of natural gifts and conditions of life."

14. UR, art. 15: Eastern Churches give great importance to the celebration of the Liturgy. Hence it is imperative to preserve and foster the Eastern liturgical traditions.

"Everybody also knows with what love the Eastern Christians enact the sacred liturgy, especially the celebration of the Eucharist."

"All should realize that it is of supreme importance to understand, venerate, preserve and foster the exceedingly rich liturgical and spiritual heritage of the Eastern Churches, in order faithfully to preserve the fullness of Christian tradition, and to bring about reconciliation between Eastern and Western Christians."

15. UR, art. 17, 2: The rich diversity of the Oriental churches expresses the Catholic and Apostolic character of the Church:

"This Sacred Synod declares that the entire heritage of spirituality and liturgy of discipline and theology in their various traditions belongs to the full catholic and apostolic character of the Church."

16. **LG, art. 13:** Catholic Church protects the legitimate differences in the Church:

"Within the Church particular Churches hold a rightful place. These Churches retain their own traditions without in any way lessening the primacy of the Chair of Peter. This Chair presides over the whole assembly of charity and protects legitimate differences, while at the same time it sees that such differences do not hinder unity but rather contribute toward it."

17. **LG, art. 23:** Each Church has its own discipline, liturgy and theological heritage:

"By divine providence it has come about that various Churches established in diverse places by the apostles and their successors have in the course of time coalesced into several groups organically united, which, preserving the unity of faith and the unique divine constitution of the universal church, enjoy their own discipline their own liturgical usage, and their own theological and spiritual heritage."

18. **SC, art. 4:** All the liturgies, Eastern and Western have equal dignity in the Catholic Church:

"Finally, in faithful obedience to tradition, this most sacred Council declares that holy Mother Church holds all lawfully acknowledged rites to be of equal authority and dignity; that she wishes to preserve them in the future and to foster them in every way. The Council also desires that, where necessary, the rites be carefully and thoroughly revised in the light of sound tradition, and that they be given new vigor to meet the circumstances and needs of modern times."

19. **CD, art. 23, 3:** The decree envisages adequate pastoral care to the faithful of different rites in the same territory. The same is seen in *OE, art 4* (see above).

For the same reasons, where there are faithful of a different rite, the diocesan bishop should provide for their spiritual needs either through priests or parishes of that rite or through an episcopal vicar endowed with the necessary faculties. Wherever it is fitting, the latter should also have episcopal rank. Or, the Ordinary himself may perform the office of an Ordinary of different rites. If

for certain reasons, these arrangements are not feasible in the eyes of the Apostolic See, then a proper hierarchy for the different rites is to be established."

20. Commentary of OE, art. 3. All Individual Churches enjoy "the same rights and are under the same obligations, even with respect to preaching the gospel to the whole world under the guidance of the Roman Pontiff." All the commentators agree that the art. 3 of the Decree on the Oriental Churches has in view the strange situation of the Oriental Churches in India. The following are some of the observations:

a). "The real reason why the right to preach the gospel, that is the right to engage in missionary activity, is especially mentioned among the rights and obligations of all the Individual Churches is to be traced to the situation in India, where the Malabar Church, which has large surplus of priests, was until recently only permitted to convert people to the Latin rite." (Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II edited by Herbert Vorgrimler, London 1967, Vol. I, p. 315)

b). "However the situation is different for the flourishing Catholics of the two Syrian rites in South India, in the State of Kerala. The Malankarians and the Malabarians, Christians of the West Syrian and of the East Syrian (Chaldean) rite respectively.... were not permitted to extend their missionary activity to their pagan Indian brothers because the territory had been assigned to Latin rite missions, which rite after all reached back that part of the globe hardly a few hundred years. This was considered not only unjust but also short-sighted because the Malabar Church is going through a period of awakening of priestly and religious vocations of unheard proportions. In addition, being denizens of India so much longer than the Latin rite Church, the Syrian rites are not considered contaminated by the European background of so many Latin rite missions." (Victor J. Pospishil, *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, The Decree on the Eastern Catholic Churches of the II Council of Vatican, N. Y., 1965, p. 13-14).

c). "By stressing the equal dignity of the different Catholic rites, the Council condemns clearly the theory of those who, mostly in

the 18th century taught that the Roman Rite enjoyed some kind of pre-eminence over the others. In the past, the apostolate in the missions has been conducted exclusively in the Latin rite. This practice has been resented by some Easterners, mostly in India, where the priests of the ancient Malabar rite were always obliged to adopt the Roman rite to undertake missionary apostolate." (*Documents of Vatican II*, edited by Walter M. Abbot, London, 1966, p. 375, foot note, no. 7).

21. Consultation on 'Evangelization and Oriental Churches in India' 1-3 December 1973, held under the auspices of the Commission for evangelization of the Syro-Malabar Bishops' Conference, Vada-vathoor, 1973. Some of the recommendations of this Consultation, are the following:

Art. III: "As we look at our Mother country we see vast areas where the salvific message of the Gospel has not yet reached. Even in several regions which offer at present excellent prospects for evangelization, the work is retarded owing to lack of personnel. We consider it our duty to preach the gospel and plant the Church all over." (*Ibid.* p. 94). Hence we request the Holy See to lift the territorial barriers imposed on the Oriental Churches in India, and to create an atmosphere wherein the Churches of various Rites in India could utilize their resources more efficiently and fruitfully for evangelization." (*Ibid.*).

Art. IV: "Religious Congregations of men and women which have a considerable number of members from the Oriental Churches should form oriental provinces for the oriental rite so that the identity of their rite can be preserved both in the formation and ministry and they keep their work of evangelization in dynamic link with the parent churches." (*ibid*)

Art. V: Oriental emigrants should be provided with adequate pastoral care according to their own ecclesial traditions:

"As tens of thousands of our people living in various



cities and industrial areas in other parts of India are cut off from their parent communities and deprived of facilities to foster their spiritual heritage and to evolve themselves into a living community fruitful in vocations and capable of evangelization, we request that the Oriental Hierarchies be given freedom to appoint pastors of their own church through dioceses erected for the purpose."

22. Letter of the participants of Bishops' Institute for Missionary Apostolate (BIMA II), organised by the mission office of F. A. B. C. at Trivandrum, India, in November 20-30, 1980 to the Bishops of Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and India:

"In order to evangelize, the Churches need to be authentic in their very existence. This puts before us the reality of the local and Individual Churches of South Asia as the concrete realization of the mystery of the Church of Christ in our region.... The existence in India of three Individual Churches, the Latin, the Syro Malabar, and the Syro Malankara is a manifestation of the richness of the mystery of the Church. Fostering communion among them through mutual acceptance and acknowledgement is felt by us as an essential requirement for fulfilling our common evangelizing mission.... The essential missionary character of the Church leads us to reflect on the peculiar condition in which the Individual Churches find themselves in India. *We are painfully aware of the situation in which the Oriental Churches feel unable to exercise their evangelizing activity as Churches in proportion to their missionary potential.* We would hope that the authorities of the three Individual Churches of India will face the problem in full sincerity and mutual openness and devise adequate solutions, having for their paramount concern the common evangelizing task of the three Churches." (para. 3. 5. 10).

23. The Message of the Cardinal Prefect of the S. C. for the Oriental Churches at the St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Vadavathoor, Kottayam on the 1st of January, 1981. In his speech the Cardinal insisted on the liturgical formation in the Seminaries. In several cases the Seminarians of the Oriental Churches from Kerala, who are outside, are denied of this basic requirement:

"Among the tasks and responsibilities proper to this Seminary not least is that of offering adequate liturgical formation to

students of the Eastern Churches of Kerala... Both the Syro-Malabar and the Syro-Malankara Churches need to promote deeper knowledge of their liturgical patrimony. The restoration of the liturgy is a long standing concern of the Syro Malabar Church and indeed of the Holy See... But the Seminary is the privileged centre of liturgical formation, in full fidelity to the respective Rites". (pp.5,6).

24. The All-India jurisdiction of the Oriental Churches which was suppressed by the Portuguese in 1599 should be restored. The strange situation in India adversely affects the reunion movement in India:

"But if the Oriental jurisdiction in other parts of India is not restored in the nearest future, there will be no meaning or prospects for ecumenical movements among our non-Catholic brethren in Kerala. At present they have got the freedom to go all over India to establish Churches of their own. If by our ecumenical or other efforts these non-Catholic brethren come to the Catholic fold they too will surely lose this freedom for evangelization as we, the Syro Malabar and Malankara rites at present suffer severely." (Consultation on Evangelization, p. 67-68).

25. Syrian Bishops' Conference Decision on the 14th March 1969: The Bishop's Conference adopted the following resolution in the light of the Decree on the Oriental Catholic Churches of Vatican II:

"The Catholic Church consists of the communion of Churches which are of equal dignity. There are three individual Churches in India. Syro Malabar, Syro Malankara and Latin. These three have their own identity and individuality. In the light of this basic ecclesial reality certain changes are necessary regarding the structure of the C. B. C. I. The C.B.C.I. should be made a confederation consisting of the Bishops' Conferences of these three churches which have equal rights and dignity" (Cf. X. Koodapuzha, *Paurastyasabhakal*. p. 145).

26. Pope John Paul II to Abuna Tekle Haimanot the Ethiopian Patriarch on October 17, 1981:

"The heritage handed down by the Apostles has been lived by our churches in different forms and ways, and it has had a varied development in accordance with the natural gifts and circum-

stances of life proper to each (Ecu. 14). This has also led to different liturgical, disciplinary, and theological expressions; in themselves, as long as this variety is complementary rather than contradictory, these different expressions are an enrichment for the life and the mission of the Church among all nations (U.R. 14-17): Hence unity of faith can be clothed with the particular cultural and spiritual contribution of each people and of each local Church." (*L'Osservatore Romano* N. 43 (707), 26 October 1981. p.9).

27. Pope Pius XII: Radio Message at the Centenary Celebrations at Ernakulam 28-31 December 1952:

"Not without reason are you proud of the facts that the Lord assigned to you that apostle who was to place his finger in the wounds of the sacred hands and his hand in the side of Jesus, so that he might bring you the divine truth about God and the redemption and with it the whole treasury of his immeasurable love and grace.

*The Catholic Church demands of no one to give up one's native ways and customs, forces no one to adopt foreign ways of living. The Church belongs to the East as well as the West."* AAS, 1953. pp 96-99.

28. H.H. Pope Pius XI erects the Syro-Malabar Hierarchy for maintaining the identity and fostering the Eastern traditions. The Pope points out the multidimensional growth of this Church under the bishops of the same rite. Hence the establishment of the hierarchy:

"Romani Pontifices, qui si rigide sane ac severe fidei et morum integritatem omni tempore defenderunt, libenter contra permiserunt, aut singulae Ecclesiae suos ritus suamque servarent liturgiam, Orientales Ecclesias praecipuo amore semper dilexerunt."

"A die autem, qua fideles ritus Syro Malabarici proprii ritus et nationis obtinuerunt Antistites, omnimode salutare fecerunt progressus. Non solum, enim penes ipsos crevit numerus religiosarum, vocationum valdeque est auctus numerus conversionum, sed et magnum habuere incrementum religiosa instituta, utpote catechumenatus, scholae, religiosae domus, ecclesiae et oratoria, unde luculenter patet quam sedulo ac prudenter gregem sibi commissum Praesules nationis Syro-Malabrensis regant. Concors itaque fuit hoc tempore Apostolicorum in India Orientali Delegatorum sententia, christianas



communitates Syro-Malabaricas longe inter meliores Indiae universae censendas esse."

Aequum igitur ac rectum existimandum est quod fideles, sacerdotes et maxime Antistites ritus Syro-Malabarici saepe ab Apostolica Sede flagitarunt, ut, nempe, Ecclesiae illi concederetur perfecta et stabilis constitutio ecclesiastica, cujus tanta vis est ad tutandam vitae christianae disciplinam salutaremque populis pariendam. (Apostolic Bull, Romani pontifices, erecting the Syro Malabar Hierarchy on December 21, 1932 cf. Varkey Vithayathil. The Origin and Progress of the Syro Malabar Hierarchy, Kottayam, 1980, p. 116: AAS vol xvi (1924) p. 257-262.)

29. Angelus Message of Pope John Paul II on 8th September 1980. Pope John Paul II spoke in glowing terms about the constant fidelity of the Syro-Malabar Church to the See of Peter and of its great evangelical dynamism.

*It is to the glory of this Church that it has not ever been severed from communion with the Church of Rome, in a continuity that the enormous geographic distance has never been able to break.*

*It is to the glory of this Church to have always had a wonderful flowering of priestly and religious vocations, male and female, with a missionary impetus enjoyed by other Churches in India and the world.*

*It is the glory of this particular Church dynamically sprung from the ground it inhabits, implanted by now for two millennia in the context of the immense land to have given life to such spiritual, cultural and charitable initiatives as to make itself respected in the eyes of its conationals, albeit of different religion.*

30. In order to maintain the principle of equality of the Churches, the Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Churches gave a few directions to the authorities of the CBCI on 26-4-78 (Prot. N.301/60). It is a sad truth that these directions were kept secret by the persons concerned and the CBCI elections were conducted without giving adequate representation to the Oriental Churches in India. But recently we have come to know of the directives given from Rome. They are the following:



"The list of component organs should comprise also the Oriental-Rite Bishops' Conferences 'saving their autonomy', this would allow for linkage with possibility of mutual communication of principal initiatives."

"In the preparation of lists of candidates for Commissions and Committees, the Oriental-Rite Episcopal Conferences should be given the right to submit names of Oriental-Rite candidates considered competent to serve as members of the various Commissions."

"Considering the number of Oriental-Rite Catholics, the General Secretariate should always comprise an Oriental-Rite member. The same is to be said of the presence of Oriental Rite members in the Commissions and other organs of the Conference. This point applies particularly to the following Commissions: (1) "Church Extension", which studies Evangelization and which should be entrusted also to the Oriental-Rite Catholics. (2) "Ecumenism", this being a field in which Oriental-Rite Catholics have a particular contribution to make, especially in relations with Oriental-Rite separated brethren."

## Book Review

*Faith and Communion of the Indian Church of the St. Thomas Christians*, Xavier Koodapuzha, Pont. Oriental Institute of Religious Studies, No. 52, Kottayam, 1982, pp. 185, Price Rs. 50.

The book under review is a welcome addition in the field of eastern ecclesiology and ecumenism. The author, Fr Xavier Koodapuzha is a noted ecclesiologist and historian who has been professor at the St Thomas Apostolic Seminary for the past 18 years. *Faith and communion...* is the author's doctoral dissertation but enhanced with the spirit of Vatican II.

*Faith and Communion...* is a historico-ecclesiological study that throws abundant light on the orthodoxy and communion of the Thomas Christians of India who have often been misunderstood by western historians as those saved from heresy and schism

and brought into the catholic communion by the Portuguese missionaries. This assertion, however, is a historical nonsense as is clear from history and the solemn assertions of the Supreme Pontiffs Pope Pius XII and John Paul II.

The book brings into relief the fact how the Thomas Christians preserved their faith and communion before the advent of the Portuguese and the latin missionaries who, may be, motivated in good faith, did all they could to bring the Thomas Christians whose ecclesiology and liturgy had developed outside the Roman Empire and which the missionaries did not understand, into the latin Church. These unwarranted attempts, covert or overt, finally resulted into the division of the Thomas Christians into a plethora of christian sects owing allegiance, to Antioch, to England, to Babylon, to Basel or to themselves. The unity of faith and communion which the Thomas Christians had jealously guarded was miserably disrupted and badly broken.

The book is divided into six chapters. In the introductory chapter are explained the terms heresy and schism. The second chapter explains Nestorianism of the seleucian Church. The third chapter brings into relief the nature of communion of this Church of the Thomas Christians with Rome. The contact and hierarchical relation of the Thomas Christians with Babylon is a background to understand better their faith and communion. The fourth chapter analyses the communion of the Thomas Christians with Rome. The fifth chapter vindicates their orthodoxy. The sixth chapter concludes the work and is followed by a doctrinal analysis on ecclesial communion in the light of Vatican II. The insight of Vatican II that the Catholic Church is a communion of Churches forms the substratum of the book.

*Faith and communion...* has also an ecumenical thrust. The post-conciliar literature on ecclesiology and ecumenism has been abundantly made use of and the vision emerges once again of the Thomas Christians one in faith and communion in the light of Vatican II. This is a very useful work for those who want to know the Church of the Thomas Christians, and lovingly look forward to its unity in faith. It also is an optimistic pointer to the future and hence a useful addition to any library.

Joseph Koikakudy.